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DRAMAS OF THE BIBLE

Dramas of the Bible

A Literary Interpretation of

THE BOOK OF JOB

and

THE SONG OF SOLOMON

By

JOHN S. FLORY, PH. D., LITT., D.

President Emeritus and Professor of English, Bridgewater College; Author of Literary Activity of the Brethren in the Eighteenth Century, etc.

1923

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Dedication

To my classes in Biblical Literature, past and to come, with the hope that the perusal of these pages may be attended with as much pleasure and interest as the preparation of them has been, this volume is affectionately dedicated.

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Preface

THIS book grew out of class discussion. It is not a commentary. It makes no pretense to a textual study of the books treated. When the text is quoted, which is frequent, it is for the purpose of determining the meaning of the author's thought.

It is assumed that the writers of the Book of Job and the Song of Solomon each had a message to deliver. To read this message in the author's words has been our constant aim. Our study is therefore an interpretation, an effort to trace a line of thought rather than to discover subtle meanings of words.

In order to arrive at the true message the simplest form of interpretation has been adopted. This is the literary method. These books are conceived as masterpieces of literary art, in dramatic form. The ordinary principles of literary interpretation are applied in their simplest terms.

The present writer has no theories to advance, neither does he desire to surprise the reader with ingenuous discoveries. To trace out the unmistakable line of thinking pursued by the author and set it forth in terms of its clear meaning, has been his sole purpose. Nothing is admitted into the interpretation which is not in the original text, either expressed or clearly implied.

Association with college students during a good many years has convinced the writer that the messages

of these poems are a sealed book, even to many highly intelligent readers. That the present volume may serve a useful purpose in unlocking this rich treasure house of wisdom and beauty and make it available to the average reader is his ardent wish.

The citations of biblical texts are from the American Revision. However, the other standard versions have been constantly compared with this in an effort to arrive at the clearest and simplest expression of the sense intended.

It has been thought best not to encumber the work with notes and references so that the message unadorned and unadulterated may have free course.

JNO. S. FLORY

Bridgewater, Virginia

May 24, 1923

Introduction

THE Book of Job is one of the great masterpieces of literature. It comes to us out of the ancient world full of primitive vigor and force, delineating in a series of scenes the struggles of the soul in its earthly conflict. From the very start it strikes deep into the profound experiences of life. It reflects a remarkable grasp of life's problems and the serious earnest spirit in which a heroic soul meets them.

The author, whoever he was, represents ripe culture and broad experience. He was not only a master of his own language and its literature, but was also deeply versed in the learning of the East in his day. He had passed through the fiery trials of religious experience and had mingled with men in the various walks of life. He was by nature a prince among men, a leader of thought and opinion. He represents the best culture of the ancient world, its truest scholarship and highest ideals of life. His book is a monument to his genius, yet of his personal life or his name he has left us not a trace. He has passed into oblivion as completely as the zephyr that follows the storm, but he has made for himself a large place in universal literature and has left his voice ringing down through the ages.

Before entering upon a discussion of the book it may be helpful to notice briefly in this chapter some of the considerations that naturally arise. Who are

the people whose life and institutions we are to study? What age of the world developed the civilization here presented to us? And in what country did this type of civilization and religion flourish? Our attitude towards the story is likewise a matter of importance. Is the life portrayed historical or the work of mere fancy? Is Job a man or a myth? We should also determine the literary form of the work. Is it epic or dramatic? Is the motive theological discussion or practical religion?

The author identifies himself with his hero. The experiences of Job are the experiences, the hopes, fears, aspirations of the author. Everything in the book is enveloped in an atmosphere of realism and truth. When Bunyan in Bedford Jail lived through the spiritual struggles of Christian, which he later embodied in his immortal Pilgrim's Progress, he was but treading in the footsteps of our author and putting in immortal literature the visions and raptures of his ecstatic soul.

Job is everywhere spoken of as a real historic personage. The prophet Ezekiel groups him in a class with Noah and Daniel. The apostle James writes, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job," as he might have said of a personal friend. And the opening words of the book, "There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job," presents him with an unquestioned air of historic reality. And this is the attitude that has generally been taken by Christian scholars. If the details of the history have been somewhat modified to meet artistic and didactic ends,

there is scarcely a doubt that the story arises out of a definite background of historic fact.

But where was the land of Uz, the scene of Job's suffering? Undoubtedly it was the land inhabited by the descendants of Uz. This name was not uncommon among the ancients of the East and was borne by several of the patriarchs. The first of these was a grandson of Shem, but as many generations of Noah's descendants seem to have dwelt in the upper Euphrates valley before the Babel dispersion, he may safely be eliminated from those who migrated and gave their names to remote regions. The second bearing the name, of whom we have record, was a son of Nahor, a brother of Abraham. The third was a descendant of Esau. It is probable, therefore, that the land of Uz was a region that received its name from association with one or the other of these two.

This region has often been identified with the Hauran country in northeastern Idumea. For centuries there has been a tradition connecting Job's sufferings with the scene of an ancient monastery, the ruins of which have been unearthed some twenty miles east of the sea of Galilee. But this is in the land of Palestine. The land of Uz was doubtless farther south. It is more probably to be identified with lower Arabia, the portion south of the Dead Sea and east of the Sinaitic Mountains, and not far from the upper waters of the Red Sea. This locality agrees with the indications of place and custom in the story. It was on the routes of travel from the south and east and would have brought wealthy patriarchs like Job in touch

with the culture of the cities of Egypt and Syria, with which the writer was evidently familiar. Some of the valleys of the semi-arid region were in former times quite fruitful, and might easily have been, and doubtless sometimes were, the scene of such wealth and prosperity and patriarchal dignity as is attributed to Job.

Other characters of the story seem to belong to the same region. Some of their names and the places whence they come are found among the same people. For instance, Eliphaz is the name of one of the sons of Esau, and this Eliphaz had a son by the name of Teman. It is a natural inference, therefore, that the Tema whence the Eliphaz of our story came was a region which derived its name from Teman the grandson of Esau. This was long-famed as a center of culture and scholarship. In the days of Jeremiah the prophet it was celebrated for the wisdom of its inhabitants. Obadiah also refers to Tema as a haunt for wise men, and the center of the culture of his day. The traditional location of Tema is in southern Idumea, a short distance east of the Red Sea and not very far south from the land of Uz. At the time of the poem this was a famous center of the main caravan route between the cities of Egypt and Damascus. This location is in keeping with all the known facts of the place and is in entire accord with the indications of our story. In fact the agreement is so complete even to details, that one does not hesitate to accept without qualification the traditional site as correct beyond question.

Shuah, the home of Bildad, was farther east and north, bordering on the eastern edge of the Arabian desert, adjacent to the rich lands of the Tigris-Euphrates valley. This region doubtless acquired its name also from association. Shuah was the youngest son of Abraham and Keturah. It seems very natural that after "Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac" and gave only gifts to his other children, that Shuah with others of his brethren should have taken up their abode in the country already occupied by Esau and his descendants. And this view is further confirmed when we read that "Abraham sent his other children away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the East country." The home of Bildad, therefore, while somewhat remote from the cultured Tema, was nevertheless in constant touch with it, the two centers being united by kinship of blood as well as by a community of interests and a kindred spirit.

The home of Zophar can be identified with less certainty. There was a Naamah in Judea, and the name occurs several times among the towns of Syria. It is probable, however, that the home of the third of Job's friends was somewhere in the region to the south, and probably in easy touch with Tema and Shuah. These three friends were men of like tastes, all friends of Job, each a patriarch in his own country. In the days of our story Naamah was unquestionably a seat of culture, a depository of ancient lore. It possessed an old civilization, staid and conventional, intolerant of change. It is evident that it was an isolated community, remote from the routes

of travel. If an inference may be drawn from its chief citizen, Naamah as a community had grown old and conservative and was all-sufficient unto itself. Life had turned into narrow channels and had become formal, cold and dogmatic. It was steeped in tradition with its face towards the past. That it was not wholly cut off from other centers, however, is shown by the fact that the news of Job's affliction penetrated to this out of the way corner and led its leading citizen to undertake the journey of consolation with his friends.

The other actor who plays an important role in the story should also be noted here in his relation to the others. Elihu describes himself as the son of Barachel the Buzite. Buza was undoubtedly a district which took its name from Buz, a son of Nahor and brother to Uz. This identifies the newcomer with the same stock whose life history makes up our story. The locality occupied by the Buzites is unknown. But long years after the time of our story the prophet Jeremiah mentioned Buz along with Uz, Tema, and Dedan, the last on the Persian Gulf. As all of these places are located in Idumea, it is evident that the Buzites occupied a section of territory somewhere in this same region.

Who then are the people whose life history, religion and experience make up our story? It has been suggested that Job is only an abbreviated form of Jobab, which was the name of one of the descendants of Esau. If this is admitted the five leading actors of the story are clearly the descendants of Abraham

through Esau, or from the collateral line of Nahor. The home of the ancient civilization they represent is, as we have seen, the land of Edom, occupied by Esau and his descendants. It seems fairly evident then that Job was not an Israelite and that the picture of life the book portrays is not a chapter in the history of God's peculiar people.

The Idumeans or Edomites, because of their common origin, served the same God as the Hebrews, but their worship was strictly of the patriarchal type and seems to have been almost a pure nature worship. If it is understood that God's special revelations were primarily restricted to the legitimate seed of Abraham, the heirs of the promise, then the simple, noble nature worship of Job and his contemporaries will be readily appreciated. They seem to be without any special divine revelation. They know God from his manifestations in nature and from his providences in the affairs of men. Religious institutions, except the most primitive, are unknown to them. And there is no indication that God presents himself to any of them in angelic form or otherwise, as he frequently did to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the patriarchs of Israel. The religion of the poem is therefore different in important respects from that presented anywhere else in the Sacred Volume.

This fact may be taken as an explanation of the absence of any reference in the book of Job to the law of Moses, or the elaborate ritual that was worked out under its provisions. Nowhere in the entire book is there a hint of a special revelation, of the Mosaic

code, of the temple, or of the Egyptian bondage. The total absence of any reference to these important experiences and institutions in the life of the Hebrews must be taken as conclusive evidence that the writer knew nothing of them. If the author of the book was an Israelite, as some have supposed, and lived after Sinai and the Temple he did what no other author has ever succeeded in doing — completely cutting himself off from his country's past. It is difficult to adequately reproduce a past civilization; it is more difficult to completely cut oneself off from all reference to it. And for a great national poem, treasuring the deepest experiences of national life, to do so would be so unprecedented as to amount to impossibility.

Then one of two things is practically certain. Either the author of Job lived at a late period and knew nothing of the detail of Israelitish history through the Egyptian and Wilderness periods and the early monarchy, or the time of the poem antedates these events. Since the former assumption is incompatible with all the evidence and reason, as we have seen, the latter inference seems all the more probable. This early date of the poem has been discredited because it is thought that at that time letters had not been sufficiently developed to produce a masterpiece of such literary completeness. But if we accept the authorship of Moses for the Pentateuch it is difficult to see how serious objection can be urged against placing the authorship of Job in the same period. In somewhat different ways, it may be, both show literary ability of the very first order; and all things con-

sidered, it must be admitted that the age of Moses or the time of the Egyptian bondage is most probably the age that brought forth this monumental work.

There is no inherent improbability in this assumption. The references to city life in the poem, it has been suggested, are not in accord with this early date. But when we remember that in the days of Abraham, hundreds of years before this, there were already large cities, and these in close proximity to the land that produced the work, Damascus, Sodom, and the cities of Phoenecia, the objection loses force. Again the spirit of the life reflected in the poem is different from that of the later monarchy, to which time the poem has frequently been referred. The life of the poem is simple, dignified, and characterized by freedom of activity and thought that is foreign to the conventional, turbulent life in the time of the kings. Even if the hand of a later writer should be deemed necessary to account for the literary perfection of the work, there is scarcely a doubt that the poem in its essential integrity, as we have it, is the product of the age of the patriarchs.

Another matter of importance in the general consideration of the work is its literary form. The book of Job is a drama, the first great dramatic utterance of the human soul. It deals with the profound experiences of man in this world and his problems for the world to come. These experiences are expressed by the different characters in the play each in his own person. The characterization is strong, the individual actors, even when holding like views, are characterized

by traits that make them individual. In fact all the established requirements of dramatic art are observed in the structure of the work. The drama proper is in poetic form, with a prologue and an epilogue in prose. We shall note the several divisions of the book very briefly.

The prologue comprises the first two chapters of the book. This prose introduction is undoubtedly intended to be presented by a Chorus. It represents Job in the midst of his prosperity and sets the conditions out of which the story of the drama rises. By means of a chant or recitative the prologue spreads the scene and introduces the characters and determines the course of the history of the play. This is an old-fashioned device, it may be, for the most part discarded in the later development of the art, but was generally employed in the more ancient forms of dramatic composition and seems so natural here as to be well nigh indispensable.

Act I is made up of chapters three to fourteen, and consists of a round of discussions between Job and the three friends who have come to comfort him. Job is the first speaker but does not lead in the discussion. Chapter three is his first speech. This is a remarkable outburst of malediction and grief caused by his suffering. For his seeming impiety and rashness he is severely taken to task by his friends in turn. They become his accusers and employ harsh terms in dealing with him. Job is on the defensive. He endeavors to defend his conduct as well as the integrity of his

heart and the words of his mouth. The controversy leads to no conclusion.

Act II (chapters fifteen to twenty-one) resumes the discussion left unfinished in the first act. It is on the same lines as before, but more sharply drawn and more severe. The friends have undertaken an impossible task. They have undertaken to convict Job of wilful sinning and have constructed theories to prove their contention. Their theories are based on observation, experience, and the philosophy of the ancient sages. Job's skill in refuting their arguments drives them into personal abuse and concrete charges which they can not sustain. Each again appears in turn, apparently in the order of their age, the oldest first. Job replies to each in order. At the close of the act the discussion is no nearer reaching a conclusion than in the first act.

Act III consists of chapters twenty-two to thirty-one, but, unlike the first two acts, this discussion consists of three integral parts corresponding to scenes in a play. Chapters twenty-two to twenty-seven form a third and last cycle of discussion. Here the three friends appear again as accusers of Job, yet each speaks more briefly than in the former rounds. Job again replies to each in turn. The debate on the whole does not advance in this third round but rather declines. The debaters have exhausted themselves. They have no further stock of arguments and do little more than repeat themselves. The discussion dwindles into a rehearsal of commonplaces and the contentions

become confused in a maze of inconsequential discussion.

The twenty-eighth chapter is a sublime chant of the Chorus in which the thought is led away from the confusion into which it has fallen and is made to mount on the wings of inspiration to the clear atmosphere of exalted and serene vision. This prepares the way for a final speech of Job in which he appears as a prince before God, triumphing over his former inconsiderateness, his mounting faith bringing him into true accord with his Maker. In doing this he lifts the discussion into the bright sunlight of true wisdom and sublime faith.

Act IV (chapters thirty-two to thirty-seven) consists of a speech by a young man who has not hitherto appeared in the story. This is Elihu, the Buzite. He is a distant relative of the others, a considerably younger man than either of them, but has been a silent listener to what has transpired. He has made notes on the discussion and is burning for an opportunity to enter into the controversy. Job's masterly conclusion of act three leaves his three comforters without a desire to renew the discussion. This is Elihu's opportunity. He eagerly seizes it. He makes a more or less rambling speech, beginning various lines of discussion which he does not develop to a conclusion, and finally ends his address by the recital of a poem. In form his speech is ingenious and portions of it are delivered with tact, but he loses his way in his arguments and reaches no definite conclusion.

Act V begins with the first verse of chapter thirty-eight and continues to the end of the sixth verse of chapter forty-two. The greater portion of this act consists of a speech delivered by Jehovah from the whirlwind. This speech is directed to Job, and is for the purpose of showing him his relation to the universe of created things with which he lives in the world, and especially his relation to his Creator. In the presence of Divine Majesty and Power Job is made to feel his own littleness and to see how ill-advised it was for him, even in the vexation of his soul, to speak words reflecting upon the wisdom of the Almighty in directing the affairs of his universe. Job sees his mistake, confesses his indiscretion, humbles his heart before Jehovah, and is reconciled to him. This reconciliation, in which Job is accepted by God, constitutes the great moral and spiritual victory to which our thought has been directed throughout the play. It is the natural conclusion to which the whole course of action has tended, and in which the motive of the drama finds its culmination.

The Epilogue comprises the last chapter from the seventh verse on. The dramatic action has been concluded with the fifth act, but poetic justice seems to demand a vindication of Job's course in this life. To supply this the epilogue is added. Job's restoration to power, wealth, family and happiness are the natural conditions in which a great earthly career will find its vindication, and this final picture of Job in prosperity supplies the setting that gives the story a satisfying conclusion.

The Prologue

WE SHOULD understand the prose introduction to the book as furnishing the necessary background to the life and civilization to be presented, so that we may have an accurate understanding of the problems and experiences that make up the substance of the story. The first five verses introduce us to the prosperous patriarchal life of the orient. Here we see Job in the midst of his prosperity and almost ideal success and happiness. He is surrounded by his wealth in herds and flocks, with his broad acres of pasture lands, his splendid family of seven sons and three daughters spending their days in a continual round of innocent pleasure; and the entire picture is sobered and dignified by the periodical sacrifices and the worship of the patriarch.

Job's vast riches seem to set him apart from the common run of the wandering bedouin of the desert, and the last clause of the third verse makes it perfectly clear that Job was not a wandering Arab, but that he lived a settled life, occupying probably a large valley for his flocks and herds which was recognized as his own individual possession. When he is described as the greatest of all the "children of the east" he is classed with those who lived in fixed abodes, who frequently accumulated large possessions and became princes of the realm in which they lived. Such a man was Abram; such were

Isaac, Laban, and others of Old Testament record. The children of the east lived settled lives and frequently became exceedingly wealthy. Such a man was Job.

The picture of society in the fourth verse represents the same kind of isolation. Job's sons and daughters were without the society of other friends than their own family. They passed their time in beautiful, almost idyllic, ease and pleasure. Life was a gay round of innocent enjoyment in which all participated.

The religion of the poem is also purely patriarchal. There is no hint that these fine young people, noble, sweet and pure as they were, had any religion except the religion of the family, and in true patriarchal fashion this was administerd by the patriarch for his entire household. Periodically Job offered burnt offerings to Jehovah in behalf of his children, not that he knew or even suspected that they had done wrong, but out of fear that in the midst of their festivities they may have forgotten God or renounced him in their hearts. The religious atmosphere of the poem is beautifully noble, sincere and devout, and in keeping with the picture of life otherwise presented. The significant phrase of the writer, "Thus did Job continually," leads us into the appreciation of the religious habit of this idyllic society.

The second paragraph transfers the scene to heaven, and it is a majestic scene that the author lays open to the imagination. The sons of God come

presenting themselves before Jehovah, and with them Satan presents himself also. This seems to be a scene in which God's vassals appear before him at periodic intervals to present their accounts. There is nothing seemingly strange about Satan's appearance. Jehovah's question, "Whence comest thou?" hardly implies that he was out of place, but suggests that while the others were duly appointed to a given service, Satan was self-appointed. But all come alike to render account. There is no reproof or censure, and Satan's answer clearly indicates the nature of his mission. He had been going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it. Evidently he had been on a mission of spying into the affairs of men, observing their actions, weighing their motives and, in a critical state of mind, passing judgment on their lives. The inference is clear that he has voluntarily taken this office upon himself, but having done this he regards himself as one of Jehovah's vassals expected to report at given intervals. He regards himself as entirely in place in appearing with the sons of God.

His answer to Jehovah's question invites another. If he has been in the earth looking into the affairs of men he will have observed Job. Jehovah therefore invites his especial attention to this faithful servant of his, and points out to Satan that there is no other like him in the earth. And certainly the fourfold commendation of him is intended to convey to us an ideal among men. By a perfect man we are to understand one that meets the highest standards

of character in all that constitutes manly integrity, without presuming divine perfection. His uprightness was measured in terms of the original meaning of the word, standing erect, straight, looking the world in the face, strong in right purposes and a pure heart. As one that feareth God the secret of Job's perfect standard of manliness is pointed out. He is a God fearing man. His standards of living are determined by contemplation of divine ideals. The fact that he turns away from evil sums up his character in high motive, lofty purpose and a sincere desire to follow in right paths. So God's commendation of Job presents our hero to us in a way that attracts our admiration and earnest consideration.

Wonder may arise as to why God should call Satan's attention to his faithful servant. A further study of the book will make this clear. The purpose of the drama is to pass Job through the dark waters of religious trial. It is natural that Jehovah should lead him into these experiences just as he led Christ into the wilderness of his temptation.

Satan's answer at once raises the issue. His Satanic majesty can not imagine Job as being faithful to God for nothing. It is God's blessing that has made him great. By this means God has placed a hedge about him and shielded him from the reverses common to mankind. Satan chuckles with a sneer as he reminds Jehovah of this fact and suggests that under the circumstances it is perfectly natural that Job should be perfect, upright and faithful. But then he goes on to point out that if God would re-

move this hedge of favor he should look for a change in Job's conduct. "Put forth thy hand now and touch all that he hath and he will renounce thee to thy face."

Satan is ever ready to discredit the honest actions of men. To him Job was a mere time server. He would strip honest living, true fidelity, uprightness and honor of all sincerity and reduce it to the sordid materialistic philosophy of life which he represents. This view of Satan sets one of the distinctive problems of the book. The basis of Job's religion is put in question. How will he stand the test of his faith in God?

In order that the teaching of the drama may stand out with prominence Jehovah is represented as placing all the property of Job at the disposal of Satan. Job is therefore the innocent victim of Satan's malice to prove, not to Satan, but to us, the integrity of a true heart in the crucible of fiery trial. In this sense Job ceases to be an individual and becomes a type — a type of the faithful men of all ages who have risen above the besetments of time and condition and tower into the glorious light of sublime and imperishable achievement.

We should not fail to observe also, the overruling providence of God as clearly indicated in these opening scenes. Satan is given command over Job's property but is forbidden to touch the man. Satan is therefore in a state of vassalage to Jehovah. He can exercise only such power as is granted to him.

But what is the nature of this Satan with whom

Job had to deal? He is not pictured to us with horns or a cloven foot or any other marks of distinct hideousness. He is very unlike the enormous monster of Milton's poem, towering into the clouds in bulky ugliness, or creating terror by his hideous aspect. Nor does he resemble the three-faced giant of Dante's *Inferno*; nor yet is he much more like the Mephistopheles of Goethe. Like Mephistopheles he is subtle and cunning and clever, but his temptation is brought in another way. Mephistopheles tempts by corrupting the mind. He makes evil seem good. He perverts the standards of virtue and honor and enslaves his victim by destroying the moral foundations of life. The Satan of Job has no access to the mind. Moral virtue is beyond his reach. He sneers at good, smiles cynically at virtue, and pessimistically reduces all honor and virtue to a paltry and grovelling standard of life. His solitary station should also be observed. He is not attended by a legion of menials as the popular conception represents him. He has no agents. He is his own minister, and Job is his victim. It is therefore a personal devil that Job has to do with, putting to the severest test his faith under the restrictions imposed by the Almighty.

The question naturally arises, did the author of the poem forget himself by putting Job's property into Satan's hands? By no means. Satan is given the opportunity to put to test his theory. A sudden destruction of Job's property comes like an avalanche and is certainly massed by the writer for the

sake of effect. Within a brief hour Job's vast herds of oxen, asses, sheep and camels are swept away by marauding bands or destroyed by the hail and lightning of the storm. But this is not all. As a fitting climax of the awful stroke comes the news that the dwelling of Job's eldest son in which his seven sons and three daughters were banqueting has also been caught up by the tornado, destroyed by its fury and his children hurled into eternity. Satan has had his way, but what of Job?

In describing his demeanor the poet has risen to the dignity of his theme. According to the oriental custom Job arose from where he had sat during the recital of these terrible experiences. He rent his robe, he shaved his head, and fell face forward upon the ground, and worshiped. And out of the depth of his great soul came forth in measured tread the words that reveal how deep were the emotions of his heart: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return thither: Jehovah gave and Jehovah hath taken away, blessed be the name of Jehovah." There is not a syllable of complaint, not a whisper of faultfinding. The result that Satan had anticipated is absolutely wanting. In the deep integrity of his heart Job is true to his God. He has stood the severe test without flinching. His loyalty is unshaken. His faith is supreme.

But what is the significance of this terrible test of a faithful and godly servant? Can it be that God is willing to sacrifice the good of his servant to satisfy the mere caprice of Satan? Far from it. The test

was not for Satan's gratification, but for Job's good and our edification. And this experience sets the chief problem of the drama. In order that this point may be clearly understood, that we may not miss the moral background of the story's message, let us note as briefly as we may the theory proposed by Satan's sneering remark: "Put forth thy hand now and touch all that he hath and he will renounce thee to thy face."

The problem turns on Job's motive for serving God, and this involves the purpose of life and what constitutes its chief good. Various philosophies of life have been evolved, several of which are touched by Satan's question. According to a very widely accepted theory life is for enjoyment, and whatever interferes with enjoyment is bad. Suffering therefore becomes evil and whatever produces pain is wrong. The standard of good in human experience is therefore determined by whether it produces happiness or comfort, or the reverse. According to another theory suffering is a result of sin, and the more we sin the more we suffer. Failure in life, disease and sickness are directly traceable to the violation of divine law. Happiness, prosperity and success in life are on the other hand regarded as evidences of divine favor and approval. The better a man is the more he enjoys, the worse he is the more he suffers. These are widely accepted theories, I repeat, finding expression in many public discourses, and enter into the very warp and woof of much of the current thinking.

But both theories are wrong. Their primary assumptions are untrue. The human species was not created simply to enjoy. Neither is it true that men suffer in this world in proportion to their sins. Both of these theories were repudiated by the Master himself when he came into the world. It is not strange that such theories were advanced in the time of Job, but that they have been perpetuated down through the Christian era is a matter of wonder.

Life is not for enjoyment, but for man's good and God's glory. The Savior affirmed as much when on one occasion his disciples said to him, referring to the man who had never seen, "Master who has sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" The Master's reply was, "Neither he nor his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest."

If men were required to suffer in this life in proportion to their sins, and were prospered in accordance with their goodness, society could easly be gauged and classified. But Jesus taught that the sunshine and the showers come alike on the just and the unjust. And in the parable of the tares his instruction was "Let both grow together until the harvest."

This then is the philosophy of life that we are to understand is held up in the poem. Job's sufferings are for two purposes. They ennoble his own nature, and glorify God in his dealings with men. As regards Job himself, splendid as was his life up to this time it was still not perfect. What it needed for its

perfection was the deep soul experience that refines man's nature by searing away the dross of worldliness and permitting the soul to stand forth in unswerving allegiance and triumphant faith in an all-wise God.

The test of Job's fidelity as regards the honor of God's name appears in the relation of physical suffering to moral evil. Job could endure intense physical pain and mental anguish without in the least impairing the moral fiber of his life. Passing through this crucible of suffering has therefore ennobled him and God's moral purpose in his development stands forth in clear light. Job is a greater man, a better man, a greater honor to God, more self-respecting in his own eyes, more highly esteemed by his associates because of the baptism in fire through which he has passed. Physical pain and mental suffering are a very different thing from moral evil. At the same time that Job's sufferings made him a stronger man these same experiences likewise magnified the wisdom of his God whose purpose was to train him in all the higher attributes of moral and religious living.

The second chapter presents another scene in which the sons of God render their accounts to Jehovah. Satan as before appears with them. Jehovah interrogates him as on his former appearance. He answers in the same formula. He has been away on another quest of inquiring into the affairs of men, seeking something with which he might accuse them. Jehovah again reminds him of Job and points out his fidelity, significantly adding,

"Although thou movest me against him to destroy him." We should be careful not to misinterpret Jehovah's meaning in this statement. The language might seem to imply that Satan's insistence was almost producing the effect of persuading Jehovah to change his purpose. God would be unworthy his name as an all-wise and omnipotent Father if his purposes could thus be juggled with by Satan. The statement simply means to remind Satan of how he had done his best to destroy Job and yet Job remained loyal and faithful through it all.

But God's vindication of his servant brought forth another taunt from the adversary. "Put forth thy hand now and touch his bone and his flesh and he will renounce thee to thy face." "Behold he is in thy hand," replied Jehovah, "only spare his life." A second time, for the purposes of the poem, Job is committed into the hands of Satan as an innocent victim of his wrath, but with definite limitations as before.

After an interval of time has elapsed Job is a second time enveloped in the most terrible disaster. He is siezed with a horrible form of leprosy, one of the most dreaded and most loathsome of diseases. Great sheik as he was, he becomes an outcast and is removed from his dwelling to the ash heap near by. He is an object of abject misery. His own household desert him. His servants give him scant attention and even the wife of his bosom makes his hard lot still harder. It is her desperate suggestion to him that defines for us the particular basis of this terrible

ordeal through which he is made to pass. It is his integrity. As in the former test Job maintained his loyalty to God, so now he vindicates the integrity of his heart and the uprightness of his life, as the bond of relationship to his God which he refuses to let go.

This matter of Job's integrity now becomes the battleground of the poem. Here Job takes his stand. He knows that his life has been right. His unbounded faith in the goodness of God has led him into a deep realization of his power and his mercy. Altho he can not understand his affliction, he accepts it as from a just God who doeth all things well. His faith is unshaken, his allegiance undiminished. If the deep experiences of joy and contentment that have come from his faith in Jehovah should be given up where in all the universe would he seek for those things that make life worth the living? There is only one possibility, only one hope in his terrible ordeal, that is, to cling securely to his faith in God. So through the most fiery trial he rests his whole case on the satisfaction that in his heart of hearts he has been faithful to Jehovah and has maintained his allegiance to him in word and deed.

But his second test is not yet complete. In the midst of the mortal anguish of his soul even his own wife tempts him to give up the struggle, curse God and die. Her part in the story has been variously interpreted. She has been called an ally of Satan and many other hard names. But I think her part in the story is very simple and natural. An Oriental woman, even the wife of a great sheik, lives her

life on a much lower level than that of her husband. She could not be supposed to rise to Job's level of integrity and faith. Her suggestion is the extreme of unlogic. She forgot that if Job should follow it he would put himself in a much worse condition than he already is. Her words are therefore the idle prattle of a thoughtless woman, but it constitutes a third temptation for our hero. In the midst of his awful suffering Job needed encouragement and help. This kind of discouragement from the only member left of his immediate family might well nigh be the last straw that would bring the fatal result. Yet Job treated her with all consideration. He did not even scold her. "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women," he replied. "What, shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?" He recognized that whatever God sends has its use and is in its way good. He has triumphed over the temptation to give up his integrity and his faith in Jehovah.

And now we come to the last scene of the introductory story. Job in his abject misery is sitting in the ashes in the rear of his home. His disease has been upon him sufficiently long that the news of his suffering has spread beyond the neighborhood. As a great sheik he has friends who are interested in his fortunes and his welfare. Some of them plan to pay him a visit and try to bring comfort to him in his sad lot. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar prove the reality of their friendship by the difficult journey they undertake in his behalf.

By agreement they start from a given point, probably Tema, to bring comfort and help to their common friend. The long journey across the desert on camel back is no small undertaking. As they come in sight of Job's habitation they see the muffled object sitting in the ashes, but fail to recognize him as their stately friend of former days. But as the caravan approaches nearer, and they find that the bent and dejected object is no other than the patriarch of Uz, they observe all the oriental forms of deep grief. They lift up their voices and weep. They rend their robes, and sprinkle dust upon their heads. There is no question about the sincerity of their sympathy and the depth of sorrow in their hearts. Job is too miserable to be approached. They sit down upon the ground near him, none daring to break the silence. Whatever we may think of their conduct now and later, we can not for a moment question the real sorrow which they share in full measure with their friend. "Miserable comforters" Job calls them at a later time, and certainly they were. But this does not impugn their good motives and their sincere suffering with him. They have come as friends. They desire to help their friend. It is a tribute to their bigness of heart and the reality of their sympathy that in his dejection they could suffer with him a week in silence before venturing to speak a word. How trivial does our so-called sympathy frequently seem in comparison with that of Job's friends.

ACT I

The First Cycle of Discussion

(Chapters III – XIV)

Job — Chapter III

THE drama opens with Job sitting upon his ash heap and his three friends beside him. During the week of silence their thought naturally turns to Job's sudden reverse of fortune and the causes of it. Each in his own way constructs a theory according to his point of view. Job with the rest thinks through the whole matter. He knows he is the same man he was in his prosperity. God and the world have turned against him. There is no longer anything to live for. Everything worth while, wealth, children, health, respect, friends have been taken from him. It was an evil day that brought him into the world. In his long brooding he becomes desperate. His pent up feelings can no longer be controlled. He breaks the ominous silence with a burst of unrestrained malediction that is almost startling.

This first speech of Job's, the third chapter of the book, is a fine lyric poem. It is pervaded by the deep sadness that has overwhelmed him. In fact it is one of the masterly elegies of literature. It consists of four parts. To the end of the tenth verse the thought is directed upon the day when he was born. In his

utter desolation this is about all that Job has left to quarrel with. "Let the day perish wherein I was born," he begins. He wishes it might be blotted from the calendar, that it should never be thought of again. He wishes that no other human being might ever come into the world on this day. He would bury it in oblivion as a thing accursed and forever to be avoided.

From the eleventh to the nineteenth verse the tone changes from curses to wailing. Why was it necessary that he should be born at all, wretched and miserable as his lot now is; or if that was necessary why was he not allowed to die at the instant of his birth as an infant that never saw light? In his desperation it seems to him that this would have been a great blessing. Of course his cries are mere ravings but they show the awful extremity to which his affliction has brought him.

In the third section, verses twenty to twenty-four, Job falls into a series of questions. Why does a person have to live who is in perpetual misery and longs for death? What is the meaning of life to such a person? Why must he endure its agony to no purpose? The emotion of this speech is too intense, too rapt, to be thought through calmly. Job is on the verge of frenzy. He passes from malediction to wailing and from wailing to questioning simply as a means of unburdening his overloaded soul. But in all this Job is finding no fault with God or in any sense reproaching his parents. His one wish is that Providence had never brought him into the world and that the day that initiated him into a life of such suffering might be

henceforth and forever unknown. Of course Job is distracted, grief has driven him to the verge of insanity. His mind is tottering, yet he maintains his faith in God, believes in the integrity of his life and holds on tenaciously to all that is left to him.

In the last two verses of the chapter Job's thought turns from himself to his friends. What is the meaning of the long week of silence? Why had his friends sat here through all these days and nights without giving him a word of comfort? Are they really friends? Do they sympathize with him in his affliction, or are they casting reproachful eyes upon him? He has thought in this vein in the last few days. The impression grows upon him that they are not his friends but critics, that they are wagging their heads at him, that they are looking with sly glances at him, and that instead of tenderness and sympathy they are weighing him in the scales of doubt and disapproval.

"For the thing which I fear cometh upon me,
And that which I am afraid of cometh unto me.
I am not at ease, neither am I quiet, neither have I rest,
But trouble cometh."

Eliphaz — Chapters IV, V

Job's suspicion was well founded. His friends had come to the conclusion that he was a great sinner. They were hoping that when he spoke, his words would be a confession of guilt and a request for pardon.

Eliphaz, who was doubtless the oldest of the three, a man of dignity and venerable appearance, feels it his duty to correct his friend. He begins his speech with great deference and consideration. "If one assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved?" he asks; but without waiting for a reply he proceeds, "But who can withold himself from speaking?" After such a tirade as Job had just delivered who could refrain from taking him to task and setting him right? He must speak. But without harshness or abuse he reminds Job of the days when he was a great and good man, who gave wise admonition and encouragement to others. How he had strengthened the weak hands and given support and courage to those who needed it. But now since distress has come upon him he has become weak. Affliction has humbled him. Has he lost his religion? Can he not still put his trust in Jehovah? To the mind of Eliphaz Job has made a great mistake which can easily be corrected.

From his long years of observation and experience he has learned some things at first hand; but in all his years he had never known an innocent person to perish. His observation had taught him that those who do wrong experience the evil of this world. God prospers those that obey him and withdraws prosperity and blessing from those who do not. Had he not seen whole bands of robbers broken up and scattered by the over-ruling providence of God? Experience is a great teacher and these things he has seen. Consequently there is no gainsaying them.

But he has also had other experiences. In the

lonely hours of the night, when sleep comes heavily upon men, a vision was once presented to him. This vision transported him into the realm of the spirit world. He felt himself in the very presence of a great Spirit. He could even distinguish the obscure form but could not make out the appearance. But he heard its voice distinctly as it proclaimed with deep and solemn tones, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his maker?" Now, the application of this statement is not very clear. Job had nowhere claimed or intimated either such justice or such purity, and the speaker's next statement is even more startling.

> "Behold he putteth no trust in his servants
> And his angels he chargeth with folly."

It is clear, however, that Eliphaz is putting his argument in strong form. If God can not trust his own servants and the holy angels need correction and reproof, how much more does mortal man come short of the standards of conduct approved by God? This is a sweeping argument to prove to Job that he is unquestionably a sinner in God's sight. The matter is disposed of as though the last word had been said. Job has steered his skiff upon the breakers. He is like those that die without wisdom.

Eliphaz continues his experience. He recalls an incident that he had known. A godless foolish man had risen into prominence and established a family. But it was only for a short time. Disaster overtook him. His children went wrong and became a snare

and a menace to him. Predatory bands destroyed his crops and ravaged even among the thorn hedges of his home. This upstart profane man came to want. God's providence would never support one who did not put his trust in Jehovah. Job may profit by this example. After seeking to correct Job by these three instances from his own knowledge the sheik of Tema comes out boldly with advice for him. He recommends to his friend that he seek God and commit his cause unto him—the great God of nature who does marvelous things, things past finding out. This passage beginning with the eighth verse of the fifth chapter and continuing to the end of the chapter is made up of beautiful poetry. It is a lyrical expression of the nature religion of a great man in easy circumstances. The argument is constructed on the assumption that God prospers those who serve him and that only disaster and failure can be looked for by those who do not. This speech of Eliphaz therefore centers the discussion upon the main theme of the drama; the question of the cause of happiness and unhappiness, success and failure.

At the seventeenth verse Eliphaz changes from the tone of recommendation to one of comfort and hope. He calls Job's attention to the fact that his affliction is for his own good and that there is only one thing required of him to be re-established in the splendid princely position that he formerly held. This one thing is for him to confess to God his sin, ask God's pardon and blessing. If Job will but make a clean breast of the matter he can end his suffering and be

again the great sheik of Uz. He holds up to him the hope that all his property shall be recovered. That he will have children who will become great and that he shall at the end of life go down to his grave full of honors like a shock of grain in its season. This he submits as a matter that he had searched out. If Job will accept it and profit by it all will be well with him.

Job — Chapters VI, VII

Job's second speech is an answer to Eliphaz and yet it is significant that Job does not answer the argument of Eliphaz. The thrice repeated charge that Job is a sinner, based upon what Eliphaz has seen, Job wholly ignores. Only one statement in the argument of his friend does Job reply to. This is a charge that he has spoken rashly. He does not deny the charge, but "Oh, that my vexation were but weighed" against it, he proclaims. He was fully aware that he had spoken rashly, but there is a reason for it. The arrows of the Almighty are in him. If his provocation to rash utterance were but weighed against his statements, they would not seem so unreasonable. "Doth the wild ass bray when he has grass? Or loweth the ox over his fodder?" Certainly not. When the beast has plenty to eat and is satisfied he keeps quiet. It is his distress that makes him moan. So with Job.

At the eighth verse Job returns to his former plaint and prays that God might give him the desire of his heart; that is, death. The desolation of his life comes upon him again with overwhelming force,

as at his first outburst. Job still thinks sanely and considerately. He fears that his agony and suffering may drive him into indiscretion or blasphemy. His heart is right toward God and he would like to keep it so. It is the one satisfying thought he still has, that his integrity before God is complete. He can even exult in his pain that he may keep his favor with God. He has kept his word. He is not sure whether he can continue to do so much longer or not. He fears his ability to maintain his faith. Therefore while his heart is right and his allegiance to God is complete he would like to be removed from his affliction and maintain his clear record in the eyes of Jehovah.

At the fourteenth verse Job takes Eliphaz and his companions sharply to task for their attitude. They came as friends. They found Job in affliction. Job needed help and comfort. They have given him none. They have disappointed him. He reminds them that to one who is ready to faint his friends should show kindness, even if he had forsaken the Almighty. Instead of helping him they have made his lot harder. Job now breaks forth into wonderfully picturesque imagery in describing how his friends have disappointed him. He imagines a caravan coming up across the desert from the south. They are worn out with the heat and toil of the journey. They turn aside from the beaten path to go up into a deep valley where they expect to find water from the spring rains. But when they come there all faint and overcome by heat and thirst they

find everything dried up and withered. "They go up into the waste and perish." So have Job's comforters been to him. They dealt deceitfully with him as the brook. He reminds them further that they came of their own accord. He did not send for them. He did not ask their ministrations. When they come they find him in distress. Instead of helping him they make his sorrow all the greater. Job clearly implies his lack of appreciation in such comfort as this.

Once more he attacks his would-be friends when he accuses them of not being frank and fair. "You have charged me of rashness and of doing wrong. If you know this to be true why do you not teach me," he would say to them, "and cause me to understand wherein I have erred." If he has been a sinner he would like to know it. He invites them to a frank statement of his case. So far he charges that their words have been mere words. They have seen in his expressions of sorrow only idle talk. They have not penetrated to the depth of his anguish of soul. They are superficial and devoid of deep and lasting friendship. They would even speculate at his expense. He has invited them to come and discuss the matter with him; he assures them that he is able to discern good from bad, and that he will deal with them in an honest and fair way.

Beginning with the seventh chapter Job turns from his "miserable comforters," as he elsewhere calls them, to inquire whether there is not a principle that governs the destiny of men in this world. "Is

there not a warfare of man upon earth, and are not his days like the days of an hireling?'' One's destiny is not wholly in his own hands. ''As a hireling that looketh for his wages,'' so Job is made to possess months of misery and wearisome nights are appointed unto him. His life is a perpetual misery, dominated and overruled by a power over which he has no control. Through the long hours of the night he can find no sleep. His flesh heals up at one place and breaks out at another. His skin is full of worms and his body is black and deformed with ulcers. Nothing but bleak hopelessness stares him in the face. His life is a blank, he is unrecognized, he shall no more see anything good. It is the hard hand of a relentless law that urges him on into the chilly waters of oblivion. He sees no end to his career except the unknown darkness of the grave.

In the last section of the chapter Job turns from the thought of the philosophy of life to the author of life itself. He can find no justification in the law that is overruling his destiny. He feels himself treated like a wild beast in a cage. He is under the constant eye of a watchful Providence. When life might be made worth while destiny drives him into another course. If he has sinned why does not God deal frankly with him? Why must he be set up as a target at which the thunder bolts of God's wrath are continually hurled? And if he is a sinner why does not God provide a way to pardon his sins and reinstate him again in favor? This is a bold arraignment on the part of Job. If it were not absolutely

frank and sincere it would amount to blasphemy. But it is not this. Job with all the manliness of an upright heart and a clear conscience is simply demanding of Jehovah a justification of his course with him.

Bildad — Chapter VIII

Bildad has been greatly exasperated by Job's profession of innocence. His words are like a mighty wind. There is no doubt about it, Job is punished for sin. God is a just God. He deals with men according to their deserts. There is no other explanation of Job's terrible lapse of fortune. This is a cold and hard philosophy, but Bildad is incapable of understanding the situation from any other angle. He is willing to concede that Job may not have sinned personally, that the sin may have been committed by his children. But as head of his family he is responsible for his children. Therefore he dismisses the subject as if there was nothing more to say.

But to him it is a very easy matter for Job to reinstate himself into God's favor. Bildad is so fully intrenched in the current belief of his time, that God prospers people according to their faithfulness and punishes them in proportion to their sin, that he does not give even a passing thought to the possibility of any other explanation of Job's present condition. If Job will but confess his sins, make his supplication to the Almighty and turn to him with a loving, trustful heart there can be only one result. God will

accept him into favor again and start him once more upon a career of prosperity and happiness. This is a comfortable philosophy of life for the well to do and prosperous, but it had no comfort for Job.

Bildad is a brusque type of man who talks to the point and stops when he has reached it. He is devoid of tenderness and even his sympathy is cold. He employs a laconic form of speech and is dogmatic in tone. He has adopted as a basis of his intellectual creed the wisdom of the ancients. He has no respect for modern opinion or for personal experience. He applies to the former age for the source of his wisdom and gives full credence to what the fathers have searched out. Anything that does not have the hoary appearance of antiquity about it is unworthy of his consideration.

But not satisfied with a general statement of his creed he becomes concrete. "Can the rush grow without mire?" he inquires. "Can the flag grow without water?" These are axioms which no one will deny. To his mind they are all conclusive proofs. These water grasses perish more quickly from drought than other vegetation. This is a convincing illustration of Job's condition. The withdrawal of the water from the rush or the flag is symbolical of God's withdrawal of his favor from Job. Calamities have come upon him with unusual severity and accumulated fury because he had formerly been the favored object of God's providence and love. But since he has turned his back upon Jehovah Job has been overwhelmed by the sudden

reversal of fortune just as the rush immediately dies without water. But this is God's way and Job's lot is not different than others who had renounced Jehovah. Bildad is undoubtedly endeavoring to give Job comfort. He has blessed him once, if he will meet Jehovah's demands He will bless him again.

"Behold God will not cast away a perfect man," proclaims our philosopher, and we will accept his statement as true. But what does Bildad mean by a perfect man? His standard of perfection is measured by worldly prosperity or the lack of it. The perfect man is the man who succeeds in his worldly affairs, who amasses wealth, honor, influence, position. According to his philosophy, these are the gifts of God, and the marks of his favor; and all of this is so easy for Job to attain, as Bildad sees it. "If you will but return in your allegiance to Jehovah," he would say to Job,

> "He will yet fill thy mouth with laughter
> And thy lips with shouting."

Bildad was a lavish promiser, but all of his promises had no comfort for our hero bowed under the heavy hand of affliction.

Job — Chapters IX, X

Bildad's speech had only the effect of arousing Job to greater remonstrance. In fact he angered him. 'Of course, I know that what you say is true, but how can a man be just with such a God—one who has taken my property away, destroyed all my children at one

stroke, and has now made my own life a misery to me? There is no use trying to appear just before such a God. If I should try to reply to him I could not answer one of his demands in a thousand. Of course he is wise and mighty but he is also unjust and tyrannical.'

Taking up again the suggestion of Bildad, Job's mind runs along the line of God's manifestations in the world about him. 'Yes, he is a great and terrible God,' he would say. 'He shakes the earth with the earthquake and makes it tremble. He has spread out the heavens and piled up the waves of the sea. He created the Great Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the open chambers of space in the south. He has done many great and marvelous things, things that we cannot understand. He passes by me in his majesty and I see him not. I am wholly ignored. I am nothing in his sight. He is not a God of mercy, but one of cruel injustice.'

The next strophe continues the thought in much the same tone. It is the tone of complaint. God will not withdraw his anger from him. His treatment is unjust, and Job turns away discouraged and despondent. Although he believes himself righteous, he feels that God has withdrawn himself and is no longer willing to hear him. He cannot get his cause before Jehovah. Even if he could speak with him God would not give him a fair deal. "If I had called and he had answered me, yet would I not believe he had harkened unto my voice. For he breaketh me with a tempest and multiplieth my wounds without cause. He would

not suffer me to take my breath but filleth me with bitterness." In these charges Job is treading dangerously near the border line of impiety; but we should see these expressions issuing from the bitterness of his soul from which the light of God's dealing is completely shut out.

Job feels that God's treatment of him is not only unjust but arbitrary. He would like to have justice and when he pleads with God for just treatment he thinks of him as replying, "Who will summon me to justice?" God is too far away. Job cannot approach him. Although he knows that his heart is right yet his own mouth would condemn him in the sight of Jehovah. God in his awful austerity would make Job's own pious words prove himself a sinner in God's sight. In this unjust treatment God is pursuing a whimsical course with him. He destroys the perfect and wicked alike without distinction. Either God is ruling with a tyrannical hand, or he has given over the government of the world into the perverse hand of a wicked Destiny. In desperation he cries, "If God is not doing this, who then is it?"

In the third strophe of the ninth chapter Job rises to a still higher strain, if possible, of denunciation. His life is passing away like a swift messenger. He knows the end is approaching. If he resolves that he will forget his trouble and snatch a moment of good cheer, the next instant he is hurled into his misery again. If he would wash his loathsome body as white as snow, God would plunge him back into the ditch and his own clothes would abhor him. God

has withdrawn himself out of his reach. He can no longer approach him. There is no means of communication between them. Oh, that there might be an umpire, and arbritrator, who might stand between, and by placing one hand on Job and the other on God bring them together in such a way that they might understand each other. Job implies in this wish that God does not understand him and that he cannot understand God's dealing with him. "Let him take away his rod from me and cease to make me afraid."

In this desire for an umpire to mediate between himself and Jehovah the drama rises to a high point in its development. In essence this is an anticipation of the Redeemer of the world who shall mediate between God and the race. Job has in mind nothing like our Savior who shall bring a new plan of salvation, but his thought is anticipatory of such a relationship between man and his Creator as has since been established in the mediatorial office of the Christ.

In the tenth chapter, which closes Job's speech, he drops into a more subdued tone. He has almost exhausted himself in the terrible anguish of his questionings and in the turmoil of his soul. "My soul is weary of my life," he says. "I will say unto God, 'Do not condemn me, show me wherefore thou contendest with me'." His note now becomes one of inquiry. "Does it seem good to God that he should oppress and despise the work of his own hand?" Does he look upon his handiwork with an eye of flesh—the narrow, limited view of a human being? Can it be that his treatment of Job is on the low plane of man

to man? Tho God's hand formed him, yet it seems to be stretched out to destroy him; is it the part of God to destroy his own work? Has he no pleasure in his own creation? God has given him existence and has kept him alive; if he is really God he must have known that all these afflictions were to come upon him, but he hid them from him; and now his heavy hand of affliction is laid upon him without measure and without warning and, as it seems to Job, without cause. If he were wicked he would not refuse to suffer, but knowing that he is not, his life is filled with ignominy and affliction. In the midst of his sufferings God renews his witness against him and increases his indignation upon him. Surprises, changes, and warfare are his continual lot.

Why has God permitted him to be born? If he could only have passed away at his birth and never have been known, how much better it would have been. This affliction cannot endure very long. His days must soon be at an end. If God would only withdraw his hand for awhile he might yet have a little comfort before he takes his last journey. And when he looks to the end of his career, there is nothing but the darkness of the shadow of death to which he approaches—a land as dark as midnight, the land of the shadow of death without any order, and where the light is as thick darkness.

Zophar — Chapter XI

We must think of Zophar as having sat through this prolonged debate, his mind fully made up as to

the cause of Job's distress. As he was doubtless the youngest of the three visitors, custom, for which he had great respect, would forbid him from entering the discussion until his seniors had expressed themselves. Consequently by the time the discussion came round to him he was all on edge with eagerness to have his say. Job's protestations of innocence had become wearisome to him, and his prolonged discussion of his own calamities, together with the harsh words he had used against God, grated rudely against the dogmatic nature of Zophar. It is little credit to him, despite his narrow views, that he could see in all of Job's deep expressions of anguish nothing but idle bluster. To his way of thinking the time was here when Job needed to be answered positively and sharply.

"Should thy boastings make men hold their peace?
And when thou mockest shall no man make thee ashamed?"

If Job could but understand God and know how he estimates his conduct he would realize that his punishment is not so great as it deserves to be. This is harsh language, but it is in keeping with the nature of the speaker.

Zophar takes Job to task for his shortsightedness. If he knew more he could understand God's ways with him better. "Cans't thou by searching find out God? Cans't thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?"

God's thoughts are as high as the heavens, deeper than Sheol, what can Job know about them? Job has been rash to rail against God as he has done. He should not construe his limited opinion into a charge against God's judgment. God knows all things. He knows what is good and what is just. He deals with men according to their deservings. He knows that Job is false, therefore Job is reaping just what he sowed. But for a man to set up his opinion against the omnipotence of God, this is preposterous. Vain man is void of understanding. The high thoughts and purposes of the Almighty are to him as if he were born a wild ass's colt.

In this cold-blooded arraignment Zophar has spoken some beautiful poetry, and has certainly expressed his thought in a cogent and succinct form. His logic is crushing, and he relies upon it with the full weight of his confidence. But he has never thought of applying it to himself. Would he, more than Job, be able to find God by searching him out? Could he, mortal man as he is, stand before God uncondemned? Like his companions, he has a theory of life that is quite satisfactory to a man in prosperous circumstances. But it has no comfort for the one cast down by misfortune.

Like his two companions Zophar closes his speech with lavish promises. If Job will only set his heart aright, stretch out his hand toward God, put his iniquity far from him, surely God will raise him up again and his life shall be clearer than the noon day.

It is thus seen that the three friends of Job have all

adjudged his situation from the same viewpoint, and they have likewise all promised a speedy restoration of health and fortune if Job will but take the proper steps to reinstate himself into God's favor. That his calamity could be due to anything except sin, it is impossible for them to think. They have done their best, or their worst, to bring Job into a position to reenter God's favor. That they have signally failed, in this first round of discussion, is too evident. They have had much to say that has harrassed Job's soul and exasperated him almost to fury. But not one of them has had a word to say that would give a man bowed under the heavy hand of affliction a ray of comfort or hope. They have not stood by his side as friends. They have confronted him as judges and critics. Instead of extending sympathy and encouragement, they have arraigned him as a malefactor, as one who disobeyed God and seeks to defraud man. Although they are philosophers and scholars and sages, men of broad culture and ripe experience, they lack the human touch that enables them to bring comfort to a heart in its deep hour of suffering. Each has tried in turn to reconcile Job with God, yet their mistaken views and their narrow theories of life have prevented any one of them from helping him in his distress. While they have exasperated him almost beyond measure, and have caused him to speak words almost sacrilegious, yet Job in his heart has not renounced God, and his integrity and faith are still unimpaired.

The First Cycle of Discussion

Job — Chapters XII – XIV

Job's reply to Zophar takes the form of a reply to all three. He has listened to their misdirected teaching until his patience is well nigh exhausted. He has in turn been surprised, shocked, grieved, distressed, confused, and exasperated. They have proven to be anything but friends in time of need. They have entirely misjudged him. Can it be possible that they have conspired to break him down under this terrible avalanche of accusation and want of feeling? He can stand it no longer. He turns upon them with his sharpest weapon, satire, and he uses it with unblunted edge.

> "No doubt that ye are the people
> And wisdom shall die with you,"

he begins with a sarcastic smile, evidently feeling how his words must cut to the quick. In their estimation they feel that they are the embodiment of all wisdom, and that with their departure wisdom will perish from the earth. But he protests that he has understanding as well as they, and he regards himself as in no sense inferior to them. These dry saws that they have been harping on are nothing remarkable. Who is not familiar with most of the antiquated maxims they have been rehearsing? But that kind of musty philosophy has very little to do with the affairs of everyday life. To a man slipping over the brink of despair these cold formulae have no message. He knows some things from experience.

It is not true that those who are most exemplary in life succeed best in a material way, and vice versa. He has known bands of robbers in the desert to flourish, grow strong and prosperous, and he has seen those that provoke God go free from punishment. If these things prevail among men, does not the same law hold among others of God's creatures? How about the beasts? Do not the larger and fiercer live upon the weaker? Do not the vultures and the eagles and the hawks make the smaller birds their prey? Do not the larger fishes eat the smaller ones? Does not God's law everywhere show that there is no such law in operation as his accusers have been proclaiming?

"You say that with aged men is wisdom, and in length of days understanding; I say with God is wisdom and might." All of this is God's law. God not only knows but he does. His laws are beyond the ways of men. He breaketh down and it can not be built again. The deceiver and the deceived are his. He confutes people in their own counsels and makes fools of the wise. He allows kings to reign in power for a time and then overthrows them by his mighty hand. He permits nations to rise into world domination and then raises up other nations to bring them into subjection. Even the boasted wisdom of men he passes under the eclipse where the nations for a time grope as it were in darkness and ignorance. No, God does not rule after the manner advocated by the friends, but after a manner all his own.

These things are facts. Job has learned them

from his own experience. He knows that what he says is true, and the great desire of his heart is that he might speak with such a God as this. He would like to reason the matter with Him; and if his comforters would only keep quiet and let him alone it would be greatly to their credit. They are but forgers of lies and physicians of no value. God will certainly reprove them, for their course is a dishonor to him.

"Hold your peace," he says to them, "let me alone that I may speak, and let come on me what will." God may slay him, he does not know. He no longer hopes to appease the wrath of the Almighty, but he will maintain his integrity and his faith in him. God refuses to answer him or to manifest himself to him, yet Job is willing to think that, however it may be, God's ways are right, and that the only course for him to pursue is to maintain his confidence in him. There is also this satisfaction, that a godless man shall not come into Jehovah's presence. It would therefore be folly for him now to give way and renounce God when by so doing he would cut off further communication with his Lord.

With this thought in mind our hero seems to pause and take a new inventory of his life, and after a careful introspection and thorough heart searching he breaks forth with renewed confidence,

> "Behold now I have set my cause in order,
> I know that I am righteous."

Even in his hopeless state Job seems now to have no desire for death. He is sure that the integrity of his heart is right, that his life has been exemplary; and with abounding faith, that somehow, sometime God will vindicate him. In this assurance he clings to his integrity with renewed zeal.

If God would but vouchsafe to him two things he could renew his courage to try. If he would remove his heavy hand of affliction and the terror that comes from it, and then would speak to him, how glad he would be to answer and get into communication with him. Or if God would only give him the permission to speak with him and would answer him when he speaks, then he might receive some satisfaction. He might talk to God about his sins, he might receive some information about his transgressions.

In this Job is referring to the common failures incident to human life, and is very willing to admit that he has made many mistakes in his life, mistakes of ignorance, mistakes of weakness, such as everyone makes. He is not now thinking about the dominant moral purpose of his life. This he knows to be true. He has never purposely or knowingly violated God's will. His integrity is still complete. It is from this angle that he can not understand the heavy hand of affliction that has been upon him. He is like a prisoner in the stocks, or like a garment that is moth-eaten. His life counts for nothing.

In this dejected mood Job seems to pause for a moment and then breaks forth in a lyrical strain,

"Man that is born of a woman,
Is of few days, and full of trouble.
He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down
He fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not."

His lot is the common lot of mankind. As a mortal he is subject to the limitations of mortality. How can a human being be perfect? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing? not one. With a tree the case is different. A tree may be cut down, but its root remaining in the earth will send forth living branches. But a man dies and his body is laid in the grave, and where is he? Even more than a tree he disappears from view and is lost in the mysteries which belong to God alone.

Job closes his sorrowful speech with a wish that God might hide him in Sheol, the grave, which according to the belief of the time was a place of mere existence, not life, not extinction. If God would hide him away in Sheol where he might wait until his release should come, sometime in the vague indefinite future, he does not know, he would wait patiently until God should call, and then he would answer him. As the mountains gradually are worn down by the elements and the rock is consumed by the slow process of disintegration, so God is wearing out his life under the continual hand of affliction.

So the first act of the drama closes with a tone of profound sorrow. Job's life has been caught up in the whirlpool of God's wrath and is being cast he knows not where. If he could only get away from

the terrible suffering, could spend long ages in a state of semi-consciousness, to be awakened at last by the glad call of his Master, what a relief this would be. But in all these terrible experiences he is holding on tenaciously to his faith and keeps his heart and his fidelity intact.

ACT II

The Second Cycle of Discussion

(Chapters XV – XXI)

THE FIRST round of debate has made clear several things. The three friends have taken their stand on the old theology, Eliphaz relying upon the observations of himself and others, while his companions rest their conclusions on the philosophies and wisdom of the ancients. Against this heartless creed Job protests with all the vehemence of his nature. Reasoning from the facts of life and nature, and appealing to human experience, he frankly opposes their contentions and upholds the omniscience and omnipotence of divine Majesty. The friends have likewise all traced Job's affliction to the same cause and have prescribed the same remedy. Repentance and confession on his part will speedily open the windows of heaven and bring a full shower of blessings. But this is now to change. Job's persistence in maintaining his integrity and his faith drives them to shelter behind the bulwarks of their dogmatic creed, so that they never again revert to their former assurance of restoration and favor.

The second cycle therefore resumes the discussion on the original lines, with this exception. The creed of the friends has not changed except that it has

been narrowed in scope and intensified. They now bend all of their energies to convict Job of sin and to wring from him a confession of guilt. Job has put a new weapon into their hands, the keen-edged tool of irony, which they now turn upon him with telling effect. The three speak again in the same order as before, Job replying to each in turn.

Eliphaz — Chapter XV

In beginning his second speech Eliphaz gives vent to the feelings which have filled his breast as he sat through the later discussion. He taunts Job with pretentions of being a wise man. "Should a wise man make answer with vain knowledge and fill himself with the east wind? Should he reason with unprofitable talk, or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?" It is evident that all the anguish of Job's soul has had no effect upon Eliphaz. His heart has been untouched. He has not a spark of sympathy for his friend. His attitude is even more unyielding than before. He is pursuing the decrees of a relentless philosophy which blinds him to all the finer attributes of life. He washes his hands of having anything further to do with giving encouragement to such a wretched sinner. He has no word of comfort or kindness, no promise of restoration, no hope to offer. In his opinion Job has become reckless, he has pursued a rash course; his impiety has even made him fearless before God, so that he can no longer approach his Maker with sincerity and a devoted heart. This first paragraph of the

Temanite's reply is full of cutting satire and has only one purpose, to bring Job to a confession of his guilt.

Changing his tone Eliphaz launches out into a discussion which he has borrowed from Bildad, in which he reproaches Job for his lack of knowledge. "Art thou the first man that was born?" he inquires, "or wast thou brought forth before the hills?" implying that Job's reasoning from experience and observation signifies nothing in comparison with the ancient culture to which he and his friends have appealed. "With us are both gray-headed and the very aged men," he declares, "much older than thy father." This is conclusive argument in the eyes of Eliphaz. The farther back he can pursue the stream of wisdom, the nearer he can approach its fountain head, the greater will be his acquisition of truth.

In the eleventh verse Eliphaz ventures a dangerous suggestion: "Are the consolations of God too small for thee?" he asks. This consolation is evidently the words of himself and his friends. In all sincerity he believes that they have been doling out to Job the veritable wisdom of Jehovah himself. But how far from the truth he is we shall discover later on when it becomes necessary for Job to intercede in behalf of his friends that God may not wholly repudiate them because of their failure to witness for him. This touch is doubly significant as indicating how thoroughly the friends believe in the righteousness of their course, and at the same time how far their philosophy has led them from the truth.

Taking up a suggestion from Job's last speech in regard to the mistakes in his life, Eliphaz turns upon him his own weapons, as much as to say, 'Being a man, you admit the frailties common to human nature. You know that you are imperfect and liable to the weaknesses incident to mortality, and yet you proclaim your innocence. How can one that is abominable and corrupt, a man that drinketh iniquity like water, maintain that his life is right in the sight of a perfect God?' This itself is enough to condemn Job.

In the last section of his speech, Eliphaz reverts to his former position of arguing from what he has seen and what the wise men have told him. In substance his discussion is not different from what he employed in his first speech. It is the history of a wicked man who "travaileth with pain all his days." His conscience pricks him and his course in life is simply a round of buffets and injuries received from striking himself against the hard places of the world. If he prospers for a time disasters will come and sweep away his ill gotten gain. His associations are fruitless and lead to discredit and ill favor. His life goes down in the general wreck and turmoil of godless living, unhonored and unsung.

Job — Chapters XVI, XVII

The sage of Tema had spoken learnedly and with fine rhetorical flourishes, but his heartless message found no responsive chord in the heart of suffering Job. "Miserable comfort" is derived from such a

message. The patient sufferer has heard many such things, and it is the deep wish of his heart that vain words like these might have an end. It is no mark of wisdom or distinction to utter such dogmas. "I also could speak as ye do. If your soul were in my soul's stead, I could join words together against you and shake my head at you." What is easier than such mockery. But no, Job would not afflict a friend in this way. If one of his companions were in his place and he should go as a friend to bring him comfort, he would speak encouraging words and would endeavor to relieve the suffering. He would try to be a friend in deed and not only in appearance.

Turning from the men, his thought reverts again to himself, and in the discussion that follows we see Job in a worse plight than he has yet appeared. As he looks down over his loathsome body he finds it withered and emaciated. His flesh has fallen away. His skin is black and putrid. He is become a laughing stock. His former neighbors and friends look upon him as an object of divine disfavor. They stare at him with open mouths, and reproachfully smite him upon the cheek. God has abandoned him and delivered him to the ungodly.

At this juncture Job seems to pause for a moment. After reflecting upon his former career, the days of his prosperity loom up before him. But it is only a flash, and he reverts to his sad brooding again. "I was at ease," he meditates, "and he brake me asunder. Yea, he hath taken me by the neck and dashed me to pieces." He employs figure after figure

to express how the wrath of God has been visited upon him. God's arrows have pierced him from all sides. His vengeance like a giant has overwhelmed him. He has implored Jehovah from the depth of his soul and yet his prayers are unheeded.

Job's condition is rapidly changing for the worse. In addition to his emaciated physical condition, his spiritual nature is also breaking down. For the first time in all the story we find him shedding tears. "My face is red with weeping," he confesses. The brave courage of the man is giving away. But physically and mentally exhausted, he yet clings with a clear faith to his God. As if searching the inmost recesses of his soul for cause of Divine disfavor, and finding none, he sinks prostrate before a bewildering Providence whose mysteries he can not penetrate. And almost unconsciously he mutters forth the simple intuition of his heart,

> "On my eyelids is the shadow of death;
> Although there is no violence in my hands,
> And my prayer is pure."

Another pause, and Job rouses himself from the gloom that threatened to overwhelm him. He has formerly prayed for death, but now he calls for the earth not to hide him away under the reproaches heaped upon him. He has pled in vain with men and has sought to establish his righteousness in their eyes. He has received only scoffs, rebuffs and mockery in return. Now with one bold stroke for

vindication he appeals his cause to God. "Even now behold my witness is in heaven, and he that vouches for me is on high." He knows that in the records of heaven his cause must be vindicated. Men may scoff at him and mock him and cause him to shed bitter tears and wring his soul in anguish, as they had done, but before God he knows his record is clean. The suddenness and vigor with which he rallies, in his effort to find justification at God's hand, almost surprises us.

If God would only give him some assurance, some token that he has not wholly withdrawn himself, how it would cheer and encourage his drooping spirits.

"Give now a pledge, be surety now for me with thyself;
Who is there that will strike hands with me?"

The poor man's heart is desolate. For oh, so long, he has not had a friend to give him a word of comfort, and God seems to have abandoned him in his cold isolation. His heart so yearns for friendship and sympathy that he thinks of God as a personal Friend, one who could give him a hearty handshake, and the kind of comfort that his soul needs. It is impossible that he can receive this comfort from those who have come to comfort him, for God has hid from their heart understanding. Their hearts are calloused to his real condition. In their complete failure to contribute to his comfort, Job feels that God will certainly punish them because they have not been

friends. They have even been a temptation to him to renounce God and therefore can not escape the just retribution of a just and loving Father.

But Job can not long keep his thought off himself. Again he turns to his sad lot. His heart is crushed by the cruel treatment he receives from those who had once been his friends. He has become a byword and a reproach among his own people. They spit in his face and his eyes are swollen with grief. His cheeks are sunken and his limbs are mere shadows. Upright men are astonished at his treatment. How his heart yearns for friendship, but these comforters of his, how completely has every human trait vanished from their hearts. They are like vultures preying upon the vitals of a friend.

If he could only be rid of them. "Come on now, all of you," he says to them, "let me bid you farewell, I know I shall not find a wise man among you." If they would only depart and leave him alone he could bear his grief so much the easier. All the plans of his life have miscarried. His purposes have been thwarted. Even the very thoughts of his heart have been turned awry. And again in the gloom that envelopes him he can see nothing but the dark and lonely grave to which he sees himself hastening.

Bildad — Chapter XVIII

Bildad enters the discussion again even more bluntly and abruptly than before. He reproaches Job for hunting for words and asks him to consider the folly of his course; after this he will teach him what he

should know. Then wholly misrepresenting Job's intentions, he construes his language to make Job call him and his friends names. "Wherefore are we counted as beasts?" he demands, "why are we become unclean in your sight?" Then with rasping sarcasm he demands, "Shall the earth be forsaken for thee or shall the rock be removed out of its place?" A heart of stone he must have had, who could sit under the heart-rending entreaties of Job and not be touched by the terrible anguish of his soul.

But Bildad has no word of comfort and no new message; he has narrowed his field of vision, and refuses a word of promise or hope or encouragement. In fact he can scarcely be polite in his second appearance. He has concentrated his message to a determined effort of scourging out of Job a confession of sin; and with unrelenting severity he begins a delineation of the career of a godless man. It will be noticed that he speaks in general terms, but every turn of his thought is so directed as to pierce the tender flesh of his suffering victim.

> "Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out,
> And the spark of his fire shall not shine.
> The light shall be dark in his tent,
> And the lamp above him shall be put out."

He proceeds then to enumerate a series of snares that seem to be set about the world to entrap the profane man. He speaks of the net which is set for his feet, and the toils and the gin and the snare that lay

hold upon him, the noose and the trap that lurk for him in the way. As Bildad sees it all nature conspires against the godless man, and not only are these pitfalls to be met in his physical life, but

"Terrors shall make him afraid on every side,
And shall chase him at his heels.
His strength shall be hunger-bitten,
And calamity shall be ready at his side."

But this is not enough. Bildad goes on to describe the physical suffering of the godless man:

"The bars of his skin shall be devoured
Yea, the first born of death shall devour his members."

Unquestionably Bildad is here referring to the very disease from which Job is suffering. The leprosy has broken the bars of his skin, and the first born of death, the most terrible disease known to human experience, is upon his friend. Yet Bildad can taunt him in this cold blooded fashion without a tremor or a spark of remorse.

"He shall be rooted out of his tent wherein he trusteth;
And he shall be brought to the king of terrors.
There shall dwell in his tent that which is none of his:
Brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation."

But the unrelenting man has still not finished his

say. As tho it were not enough to drive the soul of his suffering friend into paroxysms of agony, he must yet hold up before him the fact that not only is he made a scourge and a laughing stock but that there is no promise for his posterity. His line of descent shall be destroyed root and branch, and his very remembrance shall perish from the earth. Not even his name will be perpetuated.

"He shall be driven from light into darkness,
And chased out of the world.

He shall have neither son nor son's son among his people,
Nor any remaining where he sojourned.
They that come after shall be astonished at his day,
As they that went before were affrighted."

This is the most unkindest cut of all. Bildad seems to pronounce these harsh words with keen relish. He has pursued Job with a stubborn doggedness that knows no letting up. It seems to be a satisfaction to him to be able to declare at the end of this tirade, "Surely such are the dwellings of the unrighteous, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God."

Job — Chapter XIX

To the poor man bowed in grief these words were almost unendurable. "How long will ye vex my soul," he inquires, "and break me in pieces with words? These ten times have ye reproached me. Ye are not ashamed that ye deal hardly with me." If

it should even be true that Job has erred he will have to endure the consequences himself. Why do men need to pursue him with unmitigated severity and reproach him for an offence against God? Let them know that God has brought this affliction and not they. God does not need their assistance in humiliating him. Their continual harrassing is therefore uncalled for and they have given themselves to a task beyond their province. God can look out for his own affairs and they will do well to know this and let him alone.

Dismissing the men with this curt answer, his wretchedness brings him to meditating again upon himself. How long has he cried out against the wrongs heaped upon him and no one has heard. He has sought help from God and men but no one has vouchsafed for him what was justly his. He feels that he is like a caged animal, hedged around so that he can not advance. His way is made dark, he can not be sure whither he would go. From a flourishing, happy, prosperous state he has been humbled in the dust. With all the integrity of his heart he has tried to worship Jehovah and him only. But God has counted him as one of his adversaries and has kindled his wrath against him. He feels like a besieged city where hostile forces are collected on every side and strong bulwarks are thrown up against him.

But this is not the worst. His comforters have proved themselves incapable of understanding his condition and he has long ago rejected their proffered help. Yet he has had true friends in his home. But now all this is changed.

"He hath put my brethren far from me,
And mine acquaintance are wholly estranged from me.
My kinfolk have failed,
And my familiar friends have forgotten me.
They that dwell in my house and my maids count me for a stranger:
I am an alien in their sight.
I call unto my servant and he giveth me no answer,
Tho I entreat him with my mouth.
My breath is strange to my wife,
And my supplication to the children of mine own mother.
Even young children despise me;
If I arise, they speak against me.
All my familiar friends abhor me,
And they whom I loved are turned against me."

This is a picture of moral perversity almost past belief. If such cruel indifference ever could have existed in Oriental society it must have represented a state of civilization which is happily past. But the picture may be heightened for the sake of dramatic effect. It represents the lowest stage to which Job is brought. His sufferings now extend far beyond the physical. The shame and disgrace heaped upon the once honored sheik of Uz by his own kindred and members of his own household—this is even worse than physical suffering. And then to be dogged day after day, week after week, by those who profess to be his friends in an unyielding effort to make him confess

wrongs which he never did, all this is too much to bear. Under such treatment his physical frame has reduced to skin and bones, and he has escaped with his life only by the skin of his teeth, which is about the least thing he can think of. Why will his professed friends not have mercy upon him? Is not God's punishment enough? Do they feel that they must take God's place in scourging him? Is God's hand short in doing that which he wills? Have his sufferings not yet sufficed to satiate their appetite for his very life? "Oh, have pity upon me, have pity upon me, ye my friends."

Job is almost exhausted. He is brought to the brink of despair. He has recently had much to say to his friends and about his friends. He has made appeal after appeal to them for mercy and consideration. He has tested to the limit the chances of receiving relief at their hands. There is only one other thing left for Job to do. He must look beyond human agencies for succor. The first thing that occurs to him is to write the record of his sufferings in a book and circulate it to all the world. He can not go down to the grave under such a load of ignominy and shame. He must vindicate himself. If the record of his misfortunes could be stored up in the libraries of the country, where succeeding generations could learn the truth about his sufferings, this might be a means of preserving to posterity the true account of his life. But a moment's reflection convinces him that, after all, books are perishable things, and in the course of time this record might be wholly lost. There must

be a better way to vindicate the truth of his career.

He remembers how kings and rulers have sometimes left the records of their achievements by inscribing them in stone. He thinks of the great bald cliff along some ravine, not far from his home, where the caravans of Tema pass in their journey to Damascus. He will have the whole face of this rock smoothed down, and with instruments of iron he will have the record of his life chiseled upon it for the edification of all who pass. This will be more enduring than books, and through the ages men can come and learn the facts about the sufferings of Job. At first this seems like an enticing plan. The sheik of Uz will yet be vindicated. The world must know the truth.

By this method kings have implored the gods for a vindication of their great works in the world. Job is gradually rising step by step from things purely human to things divine. But even an inscription in the rock will in time weather away and be lost. In Job's mounting thought there is still something better than this. In his former speech he had declared, "Behold my witness is in heaven, and he that vouches for me is on high." He can now mount a stage higher and in a bold venture of faith declare,

"As for me I know that my Redeemer liveth,
And at last he will stand up upon the earth:
And after my skin, even this body, is destroyed,
Then without my flesh shall I see God;
Whom I, even I, shall see for myself,
And mine eyes shall behold and not as a stranger."

This is the strongest statement of faith in the immortality of the soul perhaps that has come down to us from the patriarchal age. And Job was brought to this sublime faith by his own experience. All his life he had lived true to God. It was unthinkable to him that God's ways with his creatures should not find vindication in a course of just and righteous dealing. And yet experience and observation had taught him that there is no such rigorous law in operation as that which the sages of Tema, Shuah, and Naamah had been proclaiming. He knew that in fact rascality often goes unpunished in this world. And on the other hand how numerous are the instances of innocent, patient suffering, whose merit goes unrewarded on earth. If the God whom Job had served all his life is a just God, a loving Father, one who takes interest and pride in his creation, then there must be an accounting beyond this life. So on the wings of a triumphant faith Job can assert with absolute confidence that after this mortal has put on immortality in a world of spirits, he shall see God face to face. In this splendid expression Job has mounted to the heights of spiritual vision and has demonstrated the strength of godly character in the life of a faithful servant of Jehovah.

As if conscious of the exalted sphere to which he has mounted, Job seems to look down upon Bildad groveling in the cold formalism of a heartless creed. And it is with a feeling of mingled pity and scorn that he declared, 'If you continue to persecute me and to affirm that the cause of my affliction is in myself, be-

ware of the sword of God's wrath, for he will certainly punish you as one who has wronged a faithful servant and misrepresented him.'

Zophar — Chapter XX

This last thrust at Bildad was too much for Zophar. He felt that the sting of this reproof was intended for him as much as for his companion. Therefore his thoughts become active and he hastens to reply. His pride is stung and the tone of his reply is more imperative than on his former appearance.

> "Knowest thou not this of old time,
> Since man was placed upon the earth,
> That the triumphing of the wicked is short,
> And the joy of the godless but for a moment?"

From the most ancient sages this dogma had come down as a universal rule by which the world was governed. Even tho a profane man might mount up to the heavens and his head reach to the clouds, it could be only for a short time, when he would be overthrown and people would inquire, "Where is he?" The direst calamity would overtake him and his. His children would seek charity from the poor, because he would be required to give up all of his ill-gotten gain. Zophar's portrait of the godless man is very similar to the one he drew on his first appearance.

He seems to pursue his delineation of the profane man with keen relish. He thinks of him as actually rejoicing in his godlessness. His evil doing is like a

sweet morsel under his tongue. He rolls it about and enjoys it and is loath to let it go. Although justice will overtake him a little later and punish him for his wicked deeds, yet he gloats over his wickedness while it lasts. The riches he has amassed and hidden away will ultimately be found. God's vengeance pursues him and brings him to punishment. The blessings of life all around which flow like rivers will be none of his, and the flowing streams of honey and butter which exist for the righteous man he shall not even look upon. He has been an oppressor of the poor, has violently taken away a house from its rightful owner, and, therefore, his life must go down in iniquity and shame.

When we reflect that Zophar, in drawing this picture of the godless man, intends that the details shall fit Job's case, we see how prejudice and preconceived opinion have warped him from the most palpable truth. Such details as he has enumerated could never have applied to the man of Uz. To make Job out a robber and oppressor of the poor, a thief and a cheat, one who took pleasure in rascality,—all this is too ridiculous even for consideration. Yet Zophar in his fanatical zeal, pursuing a single idea, has been so warped out of his orbit that he can proclaim with dogmatic certainty that the picture he has drawn is a veritable portrait of the man who lies crushed at his feet.

He has made many bold assertions, but he has not reasoned, he has not argued the case. He has taken no account of circumstances and has paid no attention

to conditions as they exist. Yet in all sincerity he believes that he is a philosopher and that he is proclaiming the eternal law of God's dealing with men. He is a type of the narrow minded, self-sufficient dogmatist, nourishing himself upon the dry husks of ancient lore, living in the past, and with his eyes and heart shut to the experiences of life, refuses to be taught or to have his heart attuned to the throb of the common heart of mankind.

Job — Chapter XXI

Since Job's triumphant declaration in his last speech he is more collected than he has been for some time. He has overcome his tenseness of emotion and is less inclined to hasty utterance. The unjust criticism of his friends no longer exasperates him. He even sits calmly under the most unjust censure of Zophar. A calm dignity now possesses him. He is master of himself and lays a conquering hand upon the situation. When he speaks, his tone is subdued but collected and positive. He no longer contends with his friends or with Jehovah. Job has been thinking, thinking seriously. He has been thinking clearly and to an end. This speech of his is a more direct answer to the arguments directed against him than he has used for some time.

He begins with a request for attention. 'Listen to my speech,' he demands, 'and listen diligently and think about what I say, for I have something important to tell you. Then when you have heard my message, if you think it worth while to go on in your mocking

tone, mock on. As far as I am concerned, have I complained to you? My complaint is to God, and why should I not be impatient under my affliction? Now listen and let me tell you something that will surprise you; and lay your hands upon your mouths in astonishment; for when I remember what I am going to tell you I am troubled and horror takes hold of my flesh. Why is it that the wicked live, become old, and grow mighty in power? Their children become established in the business and social life of the world, and everybody knows that they have lived godless lives. But their houses are safe from fear and there are no marks of God's displeasure upon them. Their business prospers, they rear their families of happy children who go forth with music and dancing, live happy and successful lives and spend their days in prosperity. When death comes they are laid away in the grave and there has been no hint of God's displeasure.

'But this is not all. They not only live without God in the world but they openly renounce God. They say unto him depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. They are self-sufficient unto themselves. What is the Almighty that they should serve him, and what profit should they have by praying to him? This is the tenor of their lives. And now I wish you to consider, have their lives really been prosperous? Is that the course of a successful life? If you think so you think very differently from what I think. No, they have never known real prosperity. They have never known the blessing of living a godly

life. They have never lived in the sunshine of God's favor. You have branded my life as wicked, but I tell you the course of a wicked life is far from me.

'You say that the lamp of the wicked is put out and that calamity cometh upon them, and that God distributes sorrow in his anger. I wish to ask how often this happens. Of course it will turn out this way once in a while, as all rules have their exceptions; but it is not true that the wicked are punished in this life according to their wickedness. You say also that God lays up punishments for the wicked man's children. I say, what does the godless man care about his children after he is gone? That they become objects of charity or even a burden upon the community makes no difference to him. And who shall presume to teach God knowledge? Who will devise a better way for governing the world than he has ordained? His plan is plain. One dies in his full strength being wholly at ease and quiet, successful and prosperous in every way; another dies in bitterness of soul, never having tasted of the good things of life in any way; but they lie down alike in the dust and the worm covereth them. This is God's plan and there is no such law in existence as you have been trying to establish through your prolonged discussion.

'But I know your thoughts. I know the devices by which you have planned to entangle me. You will say, where is the house of the prince, and where is the tent in which the wicked dwell? You will make diligent search for the man who is prosperous and show him due respect. And have you not made inquiry

of travelers, men of experience and observation, and do you not have their testimonies? Everywhere they will tell you that an evil man is spared in the day of calamity, and that they are led away to safety in the day of wrath. Who will declare the way of a wicked man to his face? And who will repay him for the evil he has done? Yet when he dies you will bear him off to a stately burial, and men will keep watch over his grave. He will be laid away in the most pleasant part of the valley, and a long funeral procession will attend his obsequies, as the world had shown him honor while he lived.

'Now this is the way of the world, and if I had been the sinner you have proclaimed me to be, not one of you would have dared to come charging me as you have done. You would have sat mute and dumb before me. You would have loaded me with honors. You would not have dared break the tradition that does honor to the prince in his house and despite to the wicked in his tent. How vain then is the comfort ye seek to bring me, seeing in your words there remaineth only falsehood.'

Job thus closes the second act of the drama with a challenge of the entire position held by the friends. He declares a principle of world government in sharp contrast with that which they have so persistently urged. The discussion has led to no conclusion, but it is clear that Job had successfully combatted the claims of his antagonists in such a way that their position is no longer tenable. It may be that the truth of the matter will be found somewhere between the

positions held by the two parties. We shall see. Thus far in the career of Job we have had a wonderful demonstration of patience, piety, reverence, faith, all tried under the most exasperating and unjust accusations. Through it all the faith of Job has mounted from step to step and has led him as it were to a high table land of calm repose, clear thought, and dignity.

ACT III

The Third Cycle of Discussion

(Chapters XXII – XXXI)

THE second round of debate has left the question under discussion unsettled, and it will not be settled by a third round; but there are several things not yet brought out that make a continuation of the discussion necessary. In this his last appearance Eliphaz will present a phase of character he has not hitherto exhibited. If his two friends have nothing further to say in the discussion they will at least make their bow and have a parting word. Besides this there will be two other things that have to do with the structure of the play that must be considered. We shall here meet a device peculiar to the ancient drama, the Chorus, which has almost entirely passed from use in the modern development of the art. And in the latter part of this discussion we shall see Job in a new role and understand the moral significance of the element of delay in the poem, which, during these prolonged discussions, may have at times approached the verge of tediousness to the reader.

Eliphaz — Chapter XXII

Eliphaz has been waiting with comparative patience during the later discussion of his two friends with

Job. When his time comes again to speak he does not answer any particular speech of Job's but rather the tenor of his entire discussion, which is in justification of his conduct. Eliphaz therefore begins with a pointed question. "Can a man be profitable unto God?" He reproaches Job for insisting upon the rightness of his way, as tho his doing so implied that his good life could be an asset to Jehovah. He scorns such an idea. "Surely he that is wise is profitable unto himself." If Job had been wise, instead of trying to please God with his life, he would have pleased himself. It is no pleasure to God that a man lives righteously, neither does it benefit him. Eliphaz is on dangerous ground here. What kind of a God must he have set up for himself that would find no pleasure in the righteous acts of his creatures? And if God finds no satisfaction in the obedience of man, by what process of reasoning would Eliphaz reach the conclusion that God would punish him for his sins? The law should work both ways.

But Eliphaz has still in store a packet of grievous indictments for his friend. Hitherto he has been less insistent than his companions in urging specific crimes against Job. But he, like the others of his group, in his zeal to convict Job of what he conceives to be the only explanation of his sufferings, also recites a list of sins that have brought about his distress. "Is not thy wickedness great?" he begins, "neither is there any end to thy iniquities." Then he prefers his charges. Job has taken pledges from his brethren, has foreclosed mortgages and deprived them of their

property, has stripped the naked of their clothing, has refused to give water to weary travellers, and withheld bread from the hungry, has refused charity to widows, and has been cruel to orphan children. These are the causes that have brought about his distress and the terrors that have caused his wailings.

But he goes on with greater persistence and accuses Job of having done all this premeditatedly. "You have reasoned," he says to his victim, "that God is far off in his heavens, beyond the stars, behind the thick clouds, and what can he know about my actions and my thoughts?" But how unjust is such a conception of Job. All the while he has been crying for light, for an understanding of God's ways, that God would not withdraw himself from him, and that he might have access to God and commune with him. To accuse Job of having plotted to deceive God and sin deliberately in the various ways that Eliphaz has enumerated, is to do him the most palpable injustice. He closes his denunciation with a threat that if Job persists in his evil course God will visit upon him a deluge of destruction as he did upon the antediluvians because of their unmitigated sins.

It is a great credit, however, to Eliphaz that he closes his last speech with the finest tone of moral elevation that he has expressed throughout the debate. This he has learned from Job. And the fact that he could rise to this beautiful conception is clear evidence of the innate nobility of his life and character. He has sincerely tried to help his afflicted friend, but his theories have been materialistic and self cen-

tered. From the noble example of Job and his sublime utterances Eliphaz has caught a glimpse of the deeper meaning of life. He no longer has a word to say about Job's earthly prosperity as a reward of righteousness, but instead, he now points his friend to a higher type of reward. Let us quote these fine words.

"Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace:
Thereby good shall come unto thee.
Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth,
And lay up his words in thy heart.
If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up,
Thou shalt put away unrighteousness far from thy tents.
And lay thou thy treasure in the dust,
And the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks;
And the Almighty will be thy treasure,
And precious silver unto thee.
For then shalt thou delight thyself in the Almighty,
And shalt lift up thy face unto God.
Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he will hear thee;
And thou shalt pay thy vows.
Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee;
And light shall shine upon thy ways.
When they cast thee down, thou shalt say, There is lifting up;

And the humble person he will save.
He will deliver even him that is not innocent:
Yea, he shall be delivered through the cleanness of thy hands."

Eliphaz has shifted his position to higher ground. He has not changed his age-old conviction that Job's calamities are due to sin, but instead of urging Job's repentance in order that God may restore his prosperity, he now urges him to reconcile himself with God, so that he may be at peace with Him in the spirit. There is no longer a hint of the view Eliphaz formerly urged with such vehemence, a restoration of worldly prosperity. On the contrary, he now advises Job to lay his treasure in the dust and rid himself of his gold, to cast it out as stones of the brook, in order that the Almighty may become precious to him and that he may find delight and gladness of soul, as he lifts up his face to God in sweet fellowship and communion with him.

Job — Chapters XXIII, XXIV

Job's reply deals with the sense of loss and estrangement from God, which he had bewailed with such bitterness before. He seems to be disappointed, even with the changed attitude of Eliphaz. He is still condemned by his friend for being a sinner in God's sight, and the bewailing of his sad lot is still construed as being rebellion against God. But the attitude of his friends is not the thing that weighs him

down most severely. If he only knew where he could find God, so that he might go to the place where he resides, he would fill his mouth with arguments and would so present his matter that God would of necessity have to give him an answer. And he has such faith in the righteousness of his course that he does not believe that God would brow-beat him, or refuse him access. But as a righteous man he would permit him to present his cause, as an advocate before a judge, and that God would render him a decision which would put an end to this controversy and would deliver him forever from his judge. But alas, here lies the difficulty, how can he find him? He has gone forward and God is not there; he has gone backward and he can not locate him. He has searched on the left hand and on the right hand but he is nowhere to be found.

Notwithstanding God's removal from him, Job is sure that He knows his way and that sometime His judgment will be rendered; and that in the end Job will come forth tried and tested as true gold, because he has not given up the Almighty. He has always adhered to his law, he has not spoken evil against him and he has always tried faithfully to keep his word. The positive conviction in Job's heart, that when all is known he will receive justice at God's hand, is reassuring. The crushing load, that at one time had reduced him almost to despair, has been lifted; and with a clear and undiminished faith he again looks to God with confident assurance that in God's own good time he will be completely vindicated.

But there is something about the majesty of Jehovah in the presence of which Job stands in awe. He recognizes that God is of one mind, that is, he is unchangeable, and that he can not be turned away from his purpose. He recognizes also that God's providence to him is all right. God's ways are past finding out.

In the face of his bewilderment he again turns to his idea of a court. Why is it that God does not appoint times when he will hear the complaint of his people? And why do those who are faithful to him not understand him sufficiently that they on stated occasions may approach him? If God must withdraw himself from men, could it not be that at least once in a while they might have access to him to plead their causes before him? For there is much reason for doing so. There is much high-handed injustice in the world that needs redress. For instance there are those that remove the corner posts of their fields and try to claim their neighbor's property. There are those that drive other people's cattle into their fields and claim them as their own. Some even go so far as to take away the only donkey from an orphan family, or the solitary ox from a widow. They turn away the needy from their doors and drive the poor to hide themselves in out of way places of the world. High-handed oppression also drives the poor people into the wilderness in herds. They gather the poor remnant of the fodder left in the field for their beasts, and live upon the scattered bunches of grapes which they can find. They sleep out under the open sky

without protection. They are drenched by the rains, and the only shelter they can find is a cave in the rocks. Others are reduced to the vilest servitude. They are forced into slavery by their oppressive masters, and, even while they labor for them, can scarcely secure enough food to keep soul and body together. And this oppression is not only in the country regions, but "from out the populous city men groan and the soul of the wounded crieth out." And the strange thing to Job about it all is, that God permits such high-handed injustice to reign and seems not even to notice it.

These instances of injustice Job enumerates from his own observation, and they are exactly in line with a similar survey that he made in reply to Bildad's second speech. He is sure that these things are true. He has seen too many instances of them, and these stern oppressors seem to flourish and prosper as though they were under the special benediction of God's protection.

But there is another class of evil doers that Job has also noticed and to these he has not formerly referred. He wishes now to show these in contrast with those he has just spoken of, and to show that God deals differently with them. These are they that ply their trades in the dark and in secret. They are the underhand, stealthy type of criminal: the murderer, who rises just at the dawn of day to slay his victim before the populace is awake; the thief, who operates in the dark hours of the night; or the adulterer, who waiteth for the twilight; or the robber, who digs through

the walls of the house by night. These shut themselves up in the daytime for they know not the light.

"For the morning is to all of them as thick darkness;
For they know the terrors of thick darkness."

For this type of evil doers there is swift retribution. They do not prosper as those Job formerly described. Swiftly they pass away upon the face of the waters. Their portion is cursed in the earth. Their affairs do not prosper. Even their own mothers forget them. They leave no name after they have departed. Their life is a blight upon the earth and they pass away without leaving a trace behind. In making this exception Job has clarified his view and has taken the wind out of the sails of his accusers.

But Job does not give up his main contention. He still maintains that the haughty marauder prospers in his course and to all outward appearance, as tho God preserved him. His protecting hand is over him and he is exalted. He is not cut off, as the friends have maintained, but when he comes to the end of his career he is gathered as a shock of grain in the full ear. This is beyond gainsay. Job has seen it many times. Who will dare to dispute his word or put any other construction on what he has seen? Further discussion has only strengthened him in his position, and clarified his view in regard to these repeated experiences. He closes his speech with a virtual challenge that the conclusion to which he has arrived can not be successfully contradicted.

Bildad — Chapter XXVI

In Bildad's last appearance he makes no direct reply to Job's last argument. In fact he has nothing of importance to add to what he has already said, but he begins his short address in the loftiest strain he at any time employs. He conceives God as ruling in his heavenly dominions in majesty and fear. Peace and harmony are the marks of his celestial empire. And there is no limit to the armies about him. By this, Bildad probably means the angels that constantly surround his throne. Or, it may be, that in the light of his nature religion he may refer to the heavenly bodies as the armies of God. His sway is characterized by light and is so widely administered that there is none upon whom it does not shine.

It is a beautiful conception of divine Majesty, and Bildad introduces it in a final effort to convince Job that he is a sinful man. How can any man be just before such a God? How can a human being, subject to the frailities and short comings of mortal nature, appear clean and holy in the presence of a God of such majesty and nobility? To enforce his thought Bildad argues that not even the moon has brightness of her own, but shines by reflected light; and the stars, seemingly spotless in their heavenly purity are not without blemish in the sight of the infinite God. How then can any man, who is but a worm of the dust in comparison, claim that he is righteous in God's sight?

Bildad has in part redeemed himself from his former

hardness. He has at least a spark of the heavenly fire. He has sufficient elevation of soul to contemplate a God of righteousness and love. But that he wholly misunderstands His operations in the government of the world, we have seen each time he has appeared. He is still the man of narrow view, of but moderate capacity, and deeply entrenched in his prejudices. He has made no further contribution to the discussion, has merely repeated what he asserted before, without ability to argue or to give broad consideration to the matter under dispute. He has exhausted himself, for he had but a meager store from which to draw.

Job — Chapters XXVI, XXVII: 1–12

But he has angered Job. Job has been grappling with the deep problems of life, and before God's mysterious ways he stands confused, stricken with awe. This prattle of Bildad about God's way of governing the world is an insult to Job's intelligence. His pretty phrases stripped of their verbiage become the merest commonplaces. This continual harping on an instrument of one string worries Job to impatience. So he turns on Bildad with bitter scorn, as much as to say, 'You seem to think you have said something important. But here I sit weak and incapable of helping myself, and yet how have you helped me? I am without strength to grapple with my problems, and yet what support have you given me? I am ignorant and do not know what to do, yet what word of direction or consolation have you spoken? To whom have you uttered these words?'

Bildad's words have been but a hollow echo. Job in the anguish of his soul wants help. Bildad's cold words are but a mockery.

Turning to his interlocutor, he takes up the thread of his last utterance. 'You propose to discuss God's way of dealing with men,' he seems to say to Bildad. 'Let me tell you something. The God I serve is a greater God than he of whom you have spoken. Before Him they that are dead tremble beneath the waters of the ocean and the monsters of the deep. Hell and the grave are open before Him and the devouring abyss is not hidden from his view, but is under his government. And if you would see other manifestations of his power look into the north where he has stretched out the canopy of heaven over empty space. He has hung the world upon nothing. He gathers up the water in thick clouds and carries them out over the land, but the clouds are not rent nor the waters deposited except at his will. He envelopes the throne of his glory in the clouds of heaven. He has drawn a boundary upon the face of the earth, the horizon, which separates the light from the darkness. The very pillars of heaven, the high mountain peaks in the distance, upon which the heavens seem to rest, rumble and quake at God's command. He stirs the seas into billows and by his word smites it into subjection. By his spirit the heavens are beautified and garnished and the fierce elements upon the earth are subdued by his mighty hand. But behold all these manifestations of his power and glory are but the outskirts of his ways. These are but faint manifestations

of his greatness. Of God himself we hear not the faintest whisper. Who then can understand the power and the mystery and the glory of such a God?'

Job seems to pause for a moment as if conscious that he has vanquished Bildad on his own ground. A comparison of this statement with Bildad's last speech sets in interesting contrast the mental and spiritual caliber of the two men.

Job now resumes his former parable—that is, the central theme of his contention—the fact of his integrity. He begins by calling God to witness and protesting on oath that what he has declared is true. Although God has denied him the right of defending himself and seems to have abandoned him, yet as we would say, "Being in good health and of sound mind," he proceeds to make his final declaration. After having taken a careful survey of his life he declares, "Surely my lips shall not speak unrighteousness, neither shall my tongue utter deceit." He certainly would not justify the friends, for to do so would be to deny the ways of God with men; and with a fresh protest he declares,

"Till I die, I will not put away my integrity from me.
My righteousness will I hold fast, and will not let it go:
My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live."

If anyone wishes to take issue with Job in this statement let him consider himself as his enemy, for he has spoken the truth.

He turns again to the consideration of a matter he had discussed in his last discourse, that is, the fate of the godless man, the robber, the adulterer, and the thief. What is the hope of such a person even if he gain wealth, and lose his life? Will God hear the cry of such a one when trouble comes upon him? On the other hand will he take any interest in the Almighty, even in the time of trouble, since his whole life is a lie? No, he has cut himself off from God. He has no access to his presence. Although God seems not to have heard Job's prayers, yet he is different from these profane men because he still has faith in God and believes that he will ultimately deliver him from all his trouble. The godless man has no such hope. But Job has taught the friends concerning this and they themselves have seen it. Why then should they vainly seek for the true knowledge of God?

At the thirteenth verse of the twenty-seventh chapter begins another discourse which can by no process of reasoning be harmonized with the words and attitude of Job. Although these words are incorporated with Job's speech and attributed to him, it is more probable that this is due to some clerical error in copying the poem. It has been suggested that this may be the last lost speech of Zophar, and such a conjecture is more probable than any explanation that would attribute the words to Job. Let us therefore look at this section and see how it harmonizes with Zophar's former point of view.

Zophar — Chapter XXVII: 13–23

This section begins almost in the same words with which Zophar closed his former speech, 20: 29,

"This is the portion of a wicked man with God,
And the heritage of oppressors, which they received
from the Almighty."

If the godless man's children increase in number it is only for war. His offspring shall not be satisfied with an honest living, and those that remain of his stock shall go down to a dishonorable grave, and not even their mothers shall lament for them. Tho this godless man should amass great wealth and accumulate rich raiment, he shall not be privileged to enjoy it, and others shall divide his silver among them. When he builds his home it is only for the day, as tho he were building a temporary booth or as a moth builds its cocoon. His home shall not be established. He dies in the midst of his wealth but he goes down to a dishonorable grave. Calamities come upon him in life and he is snatched away suddenly as by a tempest. God's vengeance seems to pursue him. He stands in ill favor with the people of his time. Men clap their hands at him and hiss him out of his place. And all this is the natural inheritance of the godless oppressor, which he receives from the Almighty.

Now this has the very ring of the speeches of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. And not one of them at any time has given a stronger statement of their position than we have it here. The man who sins is

punished by God in this world. All that he undertakes fails to prosper. Calamities overcome him suddenly. He is held in low esteem by those about him. Divine justice pursues him with an unrelenting hand.

Job's attitude has been very different from this. He contends that the maurauding oppressor succeeds in his unrighteous ways. His plans seem to prosper. He thrives, grows rich and powerful, is held in high regard by his neighbors, is honored and respected and at his death is given a great burial. While this is not necessarily always true, according to Job, it is the general course of human experience. There is scarcely a doubt, therefore, that from the thirteenth verse onward we have the words of Zophar's last speech. This explanation of the matter is perfectly consistent with the views of all the disputants and harmonizes this last discussion with all that has gone before. So as the debate draws to a close the question is still unsettled, and there is little hope of reaching an agreement. The parties have practically exhausted the subject, and in fact have begun to repeat themselves. Job alone has maintained an original and resourceful position in regard to it. When he appears for the final argument it will be in splendid vindication of himself, but without reaching a decision in the matter under discussion.

The Chorus — Chapter XXVIII

The controversy has now reached a stage where nothing more is to be said along the former lines. The store of wisdom and the stock of arguments have

been exhausted. But this situation is not to be attributed to the lack of abilitiy in the author to see his way through the maze of controversy through which he has led us. On the contrary, he has purposely directed the discussion to this end. The action of the drama must be delayed for the time being, that the deep design of the main argument may come into clear view. The language of the twenty-eighth chapter can scarcely be attributed to Job and seems to have little meaning when so construed. But if we think of this chapter as a chant or recitative, put in the mouths of the Chorus of an ancient drama, the chapter has a clear design and an important place in the structure of the play.

The purpose of the Chorus is to present matter that is necessary for the understanding of the dramatic action, which is, after all, not a necessary part of the action. It is introduced here to raise the discussion out of the slough into which it has fallen, because of the limitations of human wisdom, into the larger light of the ways of divine providence. Through the chant of the Chorus the thought will be seen to rise from those realms of thinking which the natural man regards most highly through the stages of the highest reaches of human intelligence and wisdom to the sources of eternal good and the ultimate goal of human endeavor.

The first strophe of the chant presents a vivid description of mining operations, such as doubtless were carried on in the regions adjacent to the home of Job. The vivid description, the detailed and realistic

account of the various features of extracting the precious ores and metals indicate that the author was speaking from first hand knowledge. Beginning with the operation of a silver mine and the refining of gold, he goes on to speak of taking out the iron from the earth and smelting the copper out of the stone. His description of the dark subterranean caverns, which have been hewn out horizontally under the earth, and the sinking of deep shafts from the surface, and how the daring miners are let down over the cliffs of the rock by ropes, and ply their mining operations while dangling in the air, are all vividly and realistically portrayed.

The author stops to reflect that out of the surface of the earth grows the grain from which bread is made, but the operations going on beneath the surface are more profitable, and absorb his attention. In addition to the mines formerly described here are also the depositories of precious stones and gold dust. The venturesome spirit in which these daring enterprises are carried on is indicated by his taunt that no bird of prey has ever visited these subterranean passages, neither has a falcon's eye seen them. Even the proud beasts of the jungle and the fierce lion have never passed that way. Enterprising man has put the forces of nature under his feet. He has stretched forth his hand upon the flinty rock and overturned the mountain for his use. He has been skillful in cutting his way through the mountains of adamant and his experienced eye sees everything. To further his operations he has harnessed the mountain streams,

has stored up the waters in reservoirs and used them in his operations to bring the hidden treasures of earth to view.

These enterprises are described with a vigor and interest which seems to be intended to represent those things in which the genius of men find natural expression. But after all there is no wisdom in all that has here been described. There is much of knowledge here, much ingenuity and skill, much of enterprise and experience, much of that ability which lays the forces of nature under contribution to man's enterprise, but nothing that looks beyond the material rewards of ingenuity and cunning.

There is something better in life, however, than industry and commerce and wealth. This is wisdom; and the thought is at once raised to a quest of her.

"But where shall wisdom be found?
And where is the place of understanding?
Man knoweth not the price thereof;
Neither is it found in the land of the living.
The deep sayeth, it is not in me;
And the sea sayeth, it is not with me.
It cannot be gotten for gold,
Neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.
It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir,
With the precious onyx, or the sapphire.
Gold and glass cannot equal it,
Neither shall it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold.
No mention shall be made of coral or crystal;
Yea, the price of wisdom is above rubies.

The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it,
Neither shall it be valued with pure gold."

The author has exhausted his vocabulary in trying to locate the source of wisdom and how it may be attained; and he has led us to realize one thing, that in intrinsic value all the worth of the world can not equal the true worth of wisdom. Wisdom can not be estimated in human wealth. Even some of the more beautiful and costly jewels are not even to be mentioned in estimating the worth of true wisdom. With this splendid array of the product of the richest mines of earth we see clearly the application of the first strophe of this chant. But as wisdom is thus beyond all earthly values, the quest can not cease and the author comes back to his inquiry again.

"Whence then cometh wisdom?
And where is the place of understanding?
Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all the living,
And kept close from the birds of the heavens.
The Devouring Abyss and Sheol say,
We have heard a rumor thereof with our ears."

As the former inquiry had directed the thought to the evaluation of wisdom, these verses seek to trace it to its origin. The eyes of the world have surveyed the mundane sphere in quest of it in vain. The birds of heaven have not been able to fly high enough or to see far enough to discover its abode. And the only faint rumor that can be heard in regard to wisdom is

that the Devouring Abyss, and Abode of the Dead, the Abysmal Gulf, into which all the currents of the world flow, have heard a rumor of wisdom with their ears.

The third strophe beginning with the twenty-third verse, envelopes the inquiry with a hush of silence. If men do not know where wisdom is to be found and all the wealth of the world is as nothing in comparison with it, this is but a mark of human limitations. God understands the ways of wisdom, and he knows where wisdom is to be found; and the reason why this is so, is because his vision is not limited like that of man. He looks to the ends of the earth, and sees everything under the whole heaven. When he determined the power of the wind, and measured the waters in the seas and in the clouds, when he decreed that the earth should be watered by rain from heaven and ordained the laws of nature by which we should see the flashes of lightning and hear the roll of thunder in the sky—then it was that he declared wisdom and established it; yea, made it a part of his own omniscient providence. And unto man he said,

"Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
And to depart from evil is understanding."

This choral chant is thus seen to have an important part in the development of the story. It has raised the thought from the plane of human knowledge and wisdom where it has dwelt so long, to the lofty sphere of divine intelligence and supreme wisdom. And by

implication it clearly points out the lack of the former discussion. The reason why Job, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar were not able to reach a conclusion in their discussion was due to a lack of wisdom. Their knowledge was too limited; their sphere of observation and experience too restricted; their whole range of thought confined to too small a sphere.

Job — Chapters XXIX – XXXI

"And Job again took up his parable." This resumption of the discussion is in a changed vein. After listening to the Chorus, Job is in a frame of mind to express his gratitude to God for all that he has been permitted to enjoy in the world. To that long period of happiness and prosperity, through which he was permitted to live, he has only once or twice in the entire discussion reverted, and then only with a passing glance. His thought has been upon his present calamity and the mysterious way in which God is dealing with him. Now he turns back to take a long lingering joyous survey of those happy days; and it is with a heart full of gratitude to God that he contemplates the joy and blessedness of that period.

He yearns for a return of the former days when God seemed to watch over him with a sort of special protection, when he was guided in the affairs of life as it were by a special light of God's providence. He had thus lived until he was in the ripeness of his years and enjoyed a personal friendship with God, surrounded by his flocks, in his comfortable home,

with his children about him, and all of his affairs prospering. Job is grateful for these blessings, but his thought wanders on to other things even of greater satisfaction to him; to the esteem in which he was held by his fellowmen and the service which, through God's favor, he was permitted to render them. He recalls the time when he went forth to the gate of the city as one of the city fathers; how the young men stood aside in deference for him, and how when he entered the council chamber the old men who were already seated arose at his entrance out of respect to him, and how even the princes refrained from speaking upon any matter presented until his opinion had been heard. How honored he was at that time by all who knew him. And this honor was accorded him because of his superior wisdom and his kindness.

He reminds himself in detail of the deeds of kindness and justice which he was accustomed to perform in those days. As a magistrate he made it his duty to befriend the poor and needy. He helped the orphans and those who were reduced to the last extremity of need. He caused the widow's heart to sing for joy because of the righteous judgments which he rendered. He thinks of himself as wearing his turban as a crown of righteousness and his cloak as a robe of justice. The blind, the lame, and the destitute, he looked after, and even those who were unknown to him, when mistreated, he made it his business to seek justice for; and he boldly attacked unscrupulous oppressors and rescued the innocent

victims from their grasp. It is with great satisfaction that Job can review this period of his prosperity and he thinks of it in deep gratitude to God for the satisfaction it afforded him.

Naturally at that time he thought he should die in the full enjoyment of all these blessings and that he should be permitted to live to a good old age. He felt that a good Providence was over-ruling his affairs and that the promising children God had given him would continue the excellent traditions of his family. He was a prince among the men of his time. Not only in the councils of the city was his voice listened to in consideration, but he was often resorted to in private for advice. In important matters people sought his judgment, listened to what he said, and waited for his decision in silence. They took his judgment as the man of their council, and if for any reason they could not find access to him at once, they waited with their important matters until he could be consulted. They waited with faith and hope as one in a time of drouth waits for the rains which bring refreshing and blessing. When those about him were discouraged he smiled upon them and renewed their confidence. His wise council directed them in right ways. He dwelt as a king in their midst, as one to whom all may apply and receive comfort and help.

But these happy days are passed, and with a fond lingering look at them, Job returns to his present condition; but oh, how changed, how fallen. Instead of his former honors, he is now held in derision by

every one. Even the children of the very lowest order of society make sport of him and laugh him to shame, and these the children of parents whom he would have disdained to set with the dogs of his flock. He paints them as gaunt and emaciated for want of food. They pick up a precarious living by digging up the roots of weeds, bushes and broom-sedge. They are the off-scourings of humanity whom men drive from their midst. Their dwelling place is in the ravines of the desert and caves of the rocks. They are the children of fools, base born, outcasts of society. To this wretched rabble Job has become a by-word and a joke. They tease him, torment him, and spit in his face. They brush rudely by him where he sits, push aside his feet when he tries to make himself comfortable. They rush upon him in crowds, as soldiers rush through a breech in the wall. They become a terror to him, not only because of the physical suffering they inflict but worse. No wonder he cries,

> "They chase mine honor as the wind,
> And my welfare is passed away as a cloud."

This language seems out of place in the mouth of Job. He has been wont to speak of the poor with kindness. How shall we understand this terrible arraignment? Has Job changed his opinion with reference to the unfortunate? He has just reviewed the years of his prosperity. These are children of the people who once held him in highest esteem.

Job still feels the dignity of birth, and these vulgar insults are more than he can bear. With all of his patience Job is still only a man. He is not perfect. There is a limitation to human endurance. As a man of flesh and blood we almost feel like forgiving him for his want of composure. The degree of impudence is probably heightened for the sake of effect and may be intended to arouse our sympathy and vindicate the speaker.

Such wretched treatment would naturally hurl the suffering man again into the depth of despair. Reverting to himself, his days and months of affliction seem to him just one long sickness. By day he is in misery and at night his piercing sores keep him from rest and his pains gnaw without ceasing. God has cast him into the mire. He is like dust and ashes poured out before the wind. He cries to God and He will not answer. He stands up and looks all around but God will not see him; yet His heavy hand of persecution is ever upon him. There can be but one end to such a course, and that is the grave, the dark house of Sheol. And yet, is it not natural that he should make his moan? Will not a drowning man grasp at a straw? In his better days it had been his practice to befriend those in need and weep with those in trouble. His soul was grieved for those in sorrow and when he looked for God to have compassion on him in his affliction, he waited for light, and only darkness came. His heart is troubled. He is an outcast, a brother of jackals, and a companion of

ostriches. His skin is falling from his body and his bones burn with fever. No wonder if his voice utters only moans and sobs and weeping.

From this gloom, however, Job arouses himself. It is only for the moment that he gives way to his despair, and in the manliness of his noble and true nature, he stands up as it were, opens his heart to God, and takes another careful inventory of his life. With much detail and careful thought he reviews the whole range of his life to discover if there is a possible flaw in his living, either in public or private.

He begins with the question of moral uncleanness, and declares that he had made a covenant with his eyes so that he would not even look upon a virgin with lascivious gaze. He declares that his heart had never been enticed unto a woman and the idea of lurking stealthily about haunts of vice is too preposterous for him to consider. Such a crime is heinous and should be punished by the judges. No, in word, deed and thought his life is pure and clean from all licentiousness.

He next takes up the idea of living a hypocritical life, and communes with his heart as to whether he has "walked with falsehood" and whether he has been deceitful in his dealings with others. Has he ever lived two-faced? Has he tried to appear one thing when he was in reality something else? He calls God to witness that in this also the integrity of his life and heart has been perfect.

Could it be that he has ever mistreated his servants, disregarded their rights because they were

servants and he a master? Has he been in his relation with them, such as he would have God be in relation with him as God's servant? To the best of his thinking he can not recall when he has not acted on this principle. In fact he feels that according to nature all men are born equal. Wealth and poverty are therefore a matter of accident, and he thinks of his own servants as worthy of enjoying the privileges of life and happiness as well as himself. This is a remarkably democratic view to find expression in the patriarchal age.

He next examines himself in regard to his attitude towards the poor. Has he neglected them? Has he refused aid to the widow? Has he selfishly eaten his food and neglected the orphan and the destitute? No, as he reviews his life, from his youth up he had treated the orphan as a father and had been generous to the needy. He has given clothing to those in want and has never spoken or acted in a hard manner to those in need. So sure is he of his conduct on this point that he calls upon God to punish him with dire affliction if he has ever been cruel to the unfortunate.

Should it be thought that he put his trust in his wealth and that he prided himself because his wealth was great? This too would be a false accusation. If he has been warped out of his orbit as a true man because of his riches, and has pandered to the aristocratic classes because of social distinction, or has fawned upon greatness for the sake of power or prestige, he can find no trace of it in the review of his life. To have done so would be a great fault and

should be punished by the judges. For in doing so he would have denied God who gave him all.

Once more he conceives that he might have erred by rejoicing at the destruction of his enemies, or have found pleasure in the misfortune of those he did not like. But no, a review of his life finds no trace of such actions. He has not sinned with his mouth by pronouncing a curse upon anyone. On the other hand, the whole tenor of his life has been to show kindness and helpfulness to others. His servants would bear him witness that there is not a person in the neighborhood who has not been a guest at his table and been hospitably entertained; and when travelers came into the town where he lived not one of them ever lodged in the street, but they were invited into his home to share his bounties with him. His course of life has been open, frank and generous. He has nothing to hide from anyone. He has taken his honorable and honest course before the world. He has not inquired what society would think of his conduct. He has not been influenced by the conventionalities of the aristocratic circles in which he moves. His course of life has been dictated only by what was right and just and honorable.

Job's review of his life has been comprehensive and searching. He is able to discover no point at which he has failed, that could account for the punishment inflicted upon him. He stands before God bewildered, confused, dismayed; yet trusting and maintaining his faith. The only explanation he can give to his inquiries is, that God is treating

him like an enemy, and has passed harsh judgment upon his life.

Oh, that he might have access to God, that he might prove his innocence before him. Behold, here is the whole record of his days on earth, written out in plain character, and subscribed by his own signature. Would that God might reveal his charges against him, that Job might have them also in written form. He would carry them around upon his shoulder, he would bind them for a crown upon his forehead. He would let the world pass judgment upon whether they were true or not. If he could but have access to God he would declare unto him every detail of his life. As a prince he would go forth in the integrity of his heart and in the righteousness of his cause and maintain his course before Him.

This is a masterly and noble vindication of the integrity of a true life, and here Job's discourse properly ends. There is nothing more that a just and honorable man can do to set himself at rights before the world. And so sure is he of the truth of all that he has asserted, that before leaving the subject he wishes to go on record in a practical way. As a man of means, and an extensive farmer and property owner what has been his attitude towards the Almighty, who gave him all that he had? Has he been considerate of God's blessings? Has he been a good steward, and has he carefully husbanded the resources committed to his keeping? Has his life been lived in carelessness or indifference to

others? If he has carried on his farming operations without due regard to making them productive, if he has practised fraud in his dealings, or has in anyway wronged those who were in his employ, he prays God that thistles may grow in his fields henceforth instead of wheat and cockle instead of barley. With this solemn adjuration "the words of Job are ended."

ACT IV

Elihu's Intervention

Chapters XXXII – XXXVII

THE FOURTH section of the poem seems to be somewhat at variance with the rest of the book. It is made up of a long discourse by a young man who has not hitherto appeared in the work. He seems however to have been present during practically all of the previous discussion. He has taken notes on what was said and has worked them up into a more or less orderly, if, at times, incoherent, discourse.

This matter has been accounted for in different ways. It has been suggested that the original author of the drama, a number of years after the rest of the work was written, came back to it and added this section with the idea of making it more up to date and bringing it into conformity with the changing religious thought of the day. Such a suggestion is in keeping with the way in which the new speaker makes his appearance. He represents himself as being young while the other characters of the play are very old. They have not been represented as very old men in the play up to this time. Although patriarchs, some of them at least, Job and Zophar for instance, are not thought of as being very far

advanced in years. But there is probably a better way to account for this material. It does not seem to belong to the same period that produced the rest of the work. It is probable that it is the work of a later hand, an addition made probably centuries after the original work was produced with the idea of bringing the drama into line with the current thinking of that day.

The discourse of Elihu does not rise to the general level of the rest of the book. The speaker is a young man, wanting in experience, with limited observation, but withal a pretty good opinion of himself. His self-confidence and insistence upon the importance of his message, which, after all, makes but a slight contribution to the actual thought of the poem, are not calculated to predispose us in his favor. He is a ready speaker, rather tactful in presenting his argument, in the development of which however he frequently loses his way, and is more skillful in starting a line of thought than in concluding it. His contribution, however, deserves a careful and considerate examination.

The first five verses of the thirty-second chapter constitute a prologue to this part, in which the new speaker is presented with his credentials and pedigree and placed in the middle of the stage. It will be observed that these verses are prose, and that the poetry is not resumed until the sixth verse. The thought, too, is in the nature of an explanation. If we think of these verses, therefore, as being placed in the mouth of the Chorus, the interpretative char-

acter of this introduction will assume its proper place in the drama.

Elihu is the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram. As he has listened to the discussion he has been angered and disappointed. He was angered at Job because he justified himself rather than God; at the friends because they were not able to confute Job in argument. He has waited respectfully, if impatiently, therefore, to enter the discussion himself. When he is sure that the debate is over he eagerly seizes the opportunity to be heard.

He makes clear in his opening words why he remained silent so long. His youth, compared with the great age of the others, and his reverence for years constitute the sole cause. Days should speak, he thinks, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is also a spirit of inspiration in man that can not be ignored. He feels that he has a message that should be heard, a message inspired by the Almighty which it is incumbent upon him to deliver. Wisdom is not restricted to the aged nor to those high in authority. These are the considerations upon which he justifies his entrance into the discussion. It is interesting to note that notwithstanding his eagerness to be heard and his feeling that he is inspired with a message of importance, all he avows his purpose to do is to show his opinion.

His first address is to the three friends. He has been disappointed in them and he frankly tells them so. He had paid careful attention to their arguments and followed the evolution of their thought as they

searched out what to say. But not one of them had convinced Job of his error or had successfully answered his arguments. And he warns them not to justify themselves for their failure by thinking that they had spoken wisely and had failed because Job's arguments were unanswerable. Job should have been answered and confuted. But as Job had not directed his words against the present speaker he does not propose to answer him for them.

These are rather sharp words, especially from a young man, and they have their effect. Elihu sees the change that comes over the countenances of the three. He is almost startled at the result. He begins to speak to himself.

"They are amazed, they answer no more;
They have not a word to say.
And shall I wait because they speak not,
Because they stand still and answer no more?
I also will answer my part,
I also will show mine opinion.
For I am full of words:
The spirit within me constraineth me.
Behold my breast is as wine which hath no vent;
Like new wine skins it is ready to burst."

He speaks because he must. He can no longer contain himself. As the scowls slowly pass away from the blanched faces he turns again to the three in a courteous manner and with an apologetic air. He assures them that it is not his wont to respect any

man's person, neither is he given to flattery or adulation. It is beneath his dignity to apply vain titles to anyone. He would regard himself as worthy of punishment if he did so.

Having in a way reached an understanding with the friends, Elihu now proceeds to arraign Job before a bar of justice, and by a series of arguments to convict him of serious fault. He again urges the importance of his message and avers its truthfulness. It is from the uprightness of his heart that he speaks, and what he knows his lips shall utter sincerely. He lives and moves in the spirit of the Almighty. He recognizes that in delivering his message he is the mouthpiece of Jehovah. If Job has any answer to his speech, when it is delivered, he bids him make free with his reply. Yet he would have Job understand that in God's sight he and Job are equal. They are both men, both are formed out of the clay. He proposes to deal fairly in his discussion. He does not wish to frighten Job and he will not press him too hard in the argument.

But Job has made some desperate statements. Elihu has heard them. His ears can not deceive him. Job had said that he is clean, that he is without transgression, that he is innocent in God's sight; and that God had treated him like an enemy and found occasions to punish him. A careful comparison of Elihu's words with those of Job, to which he refers, shows that he had not taken his notes very accurately, or at least that he does not correctly represent Job's thought. Besides, he is holding Job responsible in

the terms of cold logic for expressions he had made under the provocation of severe trial. In permitting such statements to escape his lips Job is severely criticized as unjust, but the only reason given for this conclusion is that God is greater than man. Elihu has lost sight of the point in his own argument.

Job should not strive against the Almighty, because God does not need to give to any one an account of his dealings with men. But he speaks once, yea twice to a man, although he may not regard his words. One way in which God speaks to men, makes his will known to them, is in dreams and visions. When deep sleep falleth upon men he opens their ears and reveals his message. These messages are for man's good, for his guidance. They restrain him from danger and from foolish and unworthy action.

Again God speaks to man through chastisement and physical suffering, and the speaker emphasizes those severe cases of illness in which the physical frame is brought to its lowest extremities and life is made a burden; when the soul abhors dainty food and the flesh is consumed away so that it can not be seen;—severe cases that bring the soul near unto the grave and life to its destroyer. In such experiences the speaker sees the disciplinary hand of God that reveals his will and gives his message.

God also speaks through angel visits. In thus doing God is gracious unto a man and seeks to ransom him and deliver him from going down into the pit. He restores him as a child to his freshness and innocency so that he can pray unto God acceptably and live

righteously before him. He also lives happily in the sight of men and is given a prosperous career. By this kind of revelation Elihu seems to see God's hand stretched out to man in blessing, in protection, in guidance and deliverance. It is not stated why one kind of divine revelation leads to one kind of action and another to another kind. What has been mentioned is doubtless based on observations of the speaker. Further philosophizing upon the principles involved is beyond his ability.

"Lo, all these things doth God work,
Twice, yea thrice, with a man,
To bring back his soul from the pit,
That he may be enlightened with the light of the living."

Elihu is well pleased with his discussion of the question. He feels the importance of his deductions. "Mark well, oh, Job, hearken unto me, hold thy peace and I will speak." Then with a deferential air he urges Job, if he has anything to say on the subject, to be free to speak. Elihu's only object is to justify Job. But without more than offering the opportunity to speak, Elihu continues the discourse and monopolizes the conversation, as much as to say, 'if you are not pressed with a statement hold your peace and I will teach you wisdom.'

The speaker now turns to the wise men. In a conciliatory tone and with great deference he seeks to form an alliance with them against Job. Turning

away from the sufferer he speaks in confidential tones to the three and suggests that they should decide on some plan of procedure in which to refute Job's arguments. They should decide what course to pursue and determine among themselves upon what is good. But, as in his address to Job, Elihu does all the talking and chooses what is good. In the attitude he here assumes he takes the general position of the friends that Job is guilty of sin, that God is punishing him and that he should be corrected for his rash utterances. He again points out some of the things Job has said which he states with no more accuracy than before. From Job's claims, that he is righteous, that God had withdrawn himself so that Job can no longer find access to him, and that he is punished without cause, Elihu comes to the conclusion that Job is a terrible sinner who "drinketh up scoffings like water," and he charges him with going in company with workers of iniquity and associating with wicked men. And again he quotes him:

> "For he hath said, 'It profiteth a man nothing,
> That he should delight himself with God'."

What Job actually had said is this:

> "What is the Almighty that we should serve him?
> And what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?"

And this was spoken, not as expressing Job's thought, but was put in the mouth of a wicked marauder who is living a life of high-handed injustice in the world, a thing which the three friends claim did not exist.

It is a flagrant case of misquoting Job's words, torturing his thought, and even misunderstanding his position.

In sharp contrast to the wicked and short-sighted course of Job Elihu now sets the greatness and righteousness of God.

"Far be it from God, that he should do wickedness,
And from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity."

He will deal justly with all men and render to them according to their way. No injustice and no wrong doing is compatible with his nature. Who put Jehovah in charge of the whole earth, or who hath put the affairs of the earth at his disposal? Manifestly, no one. He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings. If he should set his heart upon himself, withdraw himself from men, and contemplate only his own grandeur and majesty; if he would withdraw his power and spirit from the world,

"All flesh should perish together,
And man should turn again unto the dust."

This is a fine thought of the omniscience and omnipotence of God. But what it has to do with Elihu's contention is difficult to see. Job has all along contended for the same things and even with more eloquence and in nobler language.

Beginning with the sixteenth verse of the thirty-

fourth chapter the thought becomes obscure. Again Elihu takes occasion to call for order. His frequent "listens" remind us of those speakers, who, to secure attention to their meager line of thinking, have frequently to inject these calls for attention to maintain the apparent interest of their hearers. They seem to forget that an impelling message is a far more potential means of securing attention than all the "listens" they can use. So Elihu calls for attention on entering upon his diffused discussion which we are not at all sure we can understand. But the thought seems to be something like this: 'Should even the great God of heaven, whom he had just extolled, govern the world by right if he did not govern justly? And will Job condemn him because he is mighty and governs righteously?—will Job condemn him because he has no respect for the person of princes, regards not rich or poor, because all are the works of his hands? All die suddenly without distinction in God's sight. Why then should Job find fault with God's governing the world in a way that he can not understand?

'God is vigilant, his eyes are everywhere. He sees what men do. There is no darkness or gloom which obscures them from him, or in which they can hide their works of iniquity. He knows their ways and their lives and judges them accordingly. Even great men of power he destroys in ways that we can not understand, and raises up others to take their place. Such sudden and remarkable reversals of fortune come as God's punishment for unrighteous living. These

punishments come suddenly as in a night. God openly afflicts men in the sight of their neighbors,

"Because they turned aside from following him,
And would not have regard for any of his ways."

Elihu evidently means this for Job. He has been afflicted "in the open sight of others." To his thinking there is no possible explanation of Job's suffering but the fact that his life has been wicked and wrong in God's sight. So his argument makes out Job as an oppressor of the poor, one whose heavy hand has caused the out-cry of the distressed and the needy, and this cry has caused the vengeance of God to be visited upon him. This is God's way of dealing with men and his way of preventing the godless man from acquiring great power and thus becoming a snare to the people. This is the same conclusion to which the false theories of the three friends had led them. Elihu is no more able to escape the natural consequences of his own false theory than were the others.

The speaker now turns to Job directly with a question. If a person in affliction should feel that the hand of God is heavy upon him in chastisement and would recognize that this is punishment for his evil ways; if he would confess his short-comings and his ignorance and pray for enlightenment and avow his purpose not to repeat his mistakes; if all this should be done, would he have any right to expect that God would recompense him just as he in his affliction thinks He should? Would it not be God's prerogative

to afflict his creatures as much as he might desire without making any explanation of his course with them? But Elihu is only propounding the question. Job must answer it and take the consequences. This section is very obscure and the reasoning quite incoherent. The foregoing seems to be the meaning intended.

Elihu now turns upon his assailant still more directly. He has talked over the fate of Job with men of understanding and all wise men have come to the same conclusion. Job has spoken foolishly. He has not understood what he was saying. His words are devoid of wisdom and the speaker with other wise men would like to see Job tried to the uttermost, because he has spoken like a sinful man. Job is therefore a bad example. To his sin he has added rebellion. He has rejoiced in the triumph of evil and has spoken many words against truth and righteousness.

In the course of his argument with the three Job in the anguish of his soul had stated that God destroys the righteous and the wicked alike. Elihu now confronts him with this statement and proceeds to arraign him before the court of justice for dishonoring God by these words. He wonders whether Job regards himself more righteous than God, or if he thinks himself great enough to have the right to say such things; and he points Job to the heavens. Behold how much higher are the skies than this poor man. It is implied and rightly, that God's knowledge and goodness are as far above Job's as the heavens are above the earth. This being true, what does it matter to God whether

Job has sinned or not? If he has sinned how does that effect God? If he has been righteous how does that help him? The little affairs of one man are nothing to the great Jehovah. Of course Job's wickedness may hurt him as a man and his righteousness may be profitable to him as a man, but neither the one nor the other affects God.

From the ninth verse of the thirty-fifth chapter the meaning again becomes very uncertain. The thought is obscure and the end to be reached in the argument is by no means clear. The meaning however may be something like this. 'Evil doers everywhere cry out because of the afflictions visited upon them. These afflictions are the punishments of God. Instead of mending their ways and seeking God's favor and blessing, which would bring gladness into their lives, they persist in their evil course, making their moan and their lamentation, suffering under the hand of punishment, because their hearts are set on evil. Their cry is an empty wail. God will not hear nor regard it. Job is identified with those who lift up their voices in vain entreaties. If God will not hear him in his cries of suffering, how much less will he hear him when he unjustly censures him for mistreatment. But as God has not avenged himself upon Job in anger, neither will he hear his insolent cries. All of Job's wailing and false charges against God are so many vain and foolish expressions.' "He multiplieth words without knowledge."

After this rambling effort to convict Job of impiety and unjust criticism of God, Elihu calls again for

attention. "For," says he, "I have yet something to say on God's behalf." He proposes to bring forth his store of knowledge from the far off sources of ancient wisdom, and will ascribe righteousness to his Maker. God is a mighty God, mighty in strength, mighty in understanding. He despises not any of his creatures, he deals justly with them all. If they are evil, his justice destroys them. If he must afflict them, they but receive the reward which is their due.

But he has a general, a summarizing argument for this important theme. And he is fond of grouping his arguments in threes. As on a former occasion he discovered three ways in which God makes his will known to man, so now he finds the race divided into three classes according to the way God deals with them. The first of these is altogether good. It is the prosperous, honored class, those to which Elihu, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar belong. They are the successful, well to do, favored aristocracy. God withdraws not his eyes from these righteous men, but he exalts them to the association of kings, and establishes them forever in positions of honor and power. They are the nobles of the earth, the favored few.

But there is another class of righteous folk, yet these need the disciplinary hand of God upon them. If they are bound in fetters and taken in the cords of affliction, this providence of God shows them their mistakes and points out to them that they have behaved themselves proudly. By his gracious dealings with them God opens their ears to instruction and teaches them that they should leave their evil ways.

If they listen to him, turn to him with their allegiance and give him their service, then all their future days are spent in prosperity and their years in pleasure. This language would seem perfectly natural in the mouth of either of Job's three counsellors. Elihu has reached a common conclusion with the rest. To complete the comparison, if they do not listen they will perish by the sword and die in their ignorance.

The third class are those that are wholly wicked. They have no claim upon God's mercy. In their godlessness they harbor anger in their hearts. When afflictions come they do not even recognize God or think to call upon him for help. They have never known him or tasted of the good things of his hand. They do not live to a good old age but are cut down in the prime of life. They perish from the earth in disgrace and dishonor like an accursed thing.

In which of these classes will Elihu place Job? Beginning his application with a general statement he leaves no doubt as to what he intends. God afflicts men as a means of making known to them his will, Elihu has asserted. He delivers them from affliction by means of their affliction. That is, he uses affliction to call them to a consciousness of their condition, and by oppression he opens their ears to his call. Turning now to Job he affirms,

"Yea, he would have allured thee out of distress
Into a broad place where there is no narrowness;
And that which is set on thy table would be full of fatness."

So, Job's suffering continues because he is not willing to hear God's voice or obey His will. That this is just the reverse of the truth, every reader knows too well. How Job had plead that he might know God's will, might be able to understand his ways, and feel his hand of blessing upon him. Elihu's boasted wisdom from afar has led him far from the truth. It was not wisdom drawn from knowledge or observation or experience, but a code formulated to meet the conditions of an easy going, prosperous aristocracy, to which the speaker belonged. It is cold, relentless, false, and inconsequential in its deductions.

Job is full of the judgment of the wicked. He is represented as being angry because of the punishments visited upon him. But the pious Elihu can not leave him without a warning word. He should turn to God, leave his wicked course and reinstate himself. From Job's angle it may be a difficult thing to do; but whatever it costs, he ought to make the sacrifice. Above all things he should give up his unrighteous attitude towards God. This is the cause of all his distress. He has suffered great affliction, but he has not chosen affliction, he has brought this upon himself by his wickedness. With this good advice Elihu closes his argument with an apparent air of satisfaction that he has performed a useful service.

"Behold, God doeth loftily in his power:
Who is a teacher like unto him?
Who hath enjoined him his way?
Or who can say, thou hast wrought unrighteousness?"

Elihu has brought his best efforts to bear in trying to vindicate God's course in dealing with Job, and, with all mankind. But he has signally failed. All the arguments he has proposed have led to no natural conclusion. God remains as little vindicated as Job has been convicted; and the question of Job's relation to the three friends has not even been touched.

Elihu closes his discourse by reciting a poem. Opinion differs as to the origin of this poetry. It has been suggested that he found a poem to his liking and inserted it as a conclusion to his argument. This is plausable and may be true. It is in keeping with his nature religion and with his disposition to see in the world of nature about him the handiwork of God. The poem does not seem out of place in the way he uses it. It strikes a key much higher in tone than anything Elihu has yet produced, but it is in keeping with the general attitude of his mind and the purpose of his argument.

There may be a better way however to account for this poem. We have seen how the author halted and stumbled in his argument, because he was evidently using a form of expression not natural to him. May it be that Elihu was more of a poet than a logician? And that when he sought the muse he found the liberty that was so much wanting in his argument? This seems all the more probable when we consider that at least at two places in the poem he stops and calls attention to the importance to his message, in Elihu's characteristic manner. It would have been to take unwarranted liberty with the work of another to adapt

it so freely to his use; and one feels almost warranted in saying that no one except Elihu would have constructed a poem in just the form we have it here.

Let us look into the poem itself. It is a nature ode of singular beauty. It begins with a description of the rolling clouds and the far away rumblings of an oncoming storm. The lightning is seen only as broad sheets of light above the distant horizon. The red streaks of the afternoon sun pierce to the zenith; and the drops of rain are seen to fall on the distant plain. It is the picture of a refreshing shower, bringing needed moisture to the growing crops. In it the poet sees the good hand of a wise Providence bestowing blessings upon his people. But let us hear the poet himself.

"Behold, God is great and we know him not;
The number of his years is unsearchable.
For he draweth up the drops of water,
Which distil in rain from his vapor,
Which the skies pour down,
And drop upon man abundantly.
Yea, can any understand the spreadings of the clouds,
The thunderings of his pavilion?
Behold, he spreadeth his light around him;
And he covereth the bottom of the sea.
For by these he judgeth the peoples;
He giveth food in abundance."

By this time the storm is at hand. In the tornado the poet sees the manifestation of God's power. With

the lightning He covers his hands. He directs it so that it hits the mark. The peals of thunder are the voice of his mouth. This phenomena the cattle understand and go into their shelter. Even the poet is awed by the wonder and majesty. His heart trembles and is moved as if in the presence of Jehovah. The storm now breaks overhead in all its fury. We hear the thunder rolling and reverberating under the whole heaven. The sharp flashes of lightning seem to pierce to the end of the earth. We stand with the poet in reverential awe before divine Majesty.

"Hear, oh hear the noise of his voice,
And the sound that goeth out of his mouth.
He sendeth it forth under the whole heaven,
And his lightning unto the ends of the earth.
After it a voice roareth;
He thundereth with the voice of his majesty;
And he restraineth not his lightnings when his voice is heard.
God thundereth marvelously with his voice;
Great things doeth he which we cannot comprehend."

It is a majestic picture and is contemplated by the poet with reverential awe. The terror of the storm having passed, he bids us behold some of the gentler phenomena attending it, and invites our attention again to the divine purpose in God's providence.

"For he sayeth to the snow, fall thou on the earth;
Likewise to the shower of rain,

And to the showers of his mighty rain.
He sealeth up the hand of every man,
That every man whom he hath made may know it.
Then the beasts go into coverts,
And remain in their dens.
Out of the chamber of the south cometh the storm,
And cold out of the north.
By the breath of God ice is given;
And the breadth of the waters is congealed.
Yea, he ladeth the thick cloud with moisture;
He spreadeth abroad the cloud of his lightning:
And it is turned round about by his guidance,
That he may do whatsoever he commandeth them
Upon the face of the habitable world,
Whether it be for his correction, or for his land,
Or for loving kindness, that he causeth it to come."

This strophe is in a meditative vein. The poet contemplates the phenomena of nature in a reverent spirit. He describes not only what he has seen on this occasion but his thought wanders over other similar experiences. His nature touches are very fine and subtle. When the snow falls upon the earth in the winter season, or the fructifying showers in the summer, each is an expression of God's love to man. Even the instincts of beasts are conceived in a poetic vein. They understand the ways of Providence and seek their shelter at the coming of the storm. Man stands in awe and feels his nothingness in the presence of divine Majesty. As the sirocco sweeps up from the south and the cold mists and fogs come from

the north the power of the Most High is again seen in mysterious ways. From the view point of the poet ice is formed by the breath of God and almost instantly the broad rivers and the lakes are covered by a sheet of ice clear as glass. And by the same mysterious power the clouds go rolling inland from the sea carrying great quantities of moisture and accompanied by the storm with its grumblings and mutterings and ominous flashes of lightning.

We understand today the conditions under which some of these phenomena take place and we can account scientifically for many of these wonders, and yet so reverent is the mood, so devout the spirit of the poet, that we prefer to stand by his side and contemplate the solemn majesty of the picture in the same spirit of childish reverence that prompted his statements. And he does not forget the moral lesson which is taught by all of this splendor. The hot wind from the south, the chill blizzard from the northeast, the frost, the snow and the hail, as well as the gentle showers, the thundering and the lightning are so many manifestations of the presence of the Almighty power. All these forces of nature are turned about by His guidance that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the habitable world. And God uses these forces for various purposes. It may be for man's correction, it may be for the good of the land and the people, or it may be an expression of his loving kindness to the human race.

The next strophe begins with a formula that one

does not hesitate to attribute to Elihu. "Hearken unto this, Oh, Job, stand still and consider the wondrous works of God." Calling his auditor's attention in this familiar way he now plies him with several questions to further enforce the moral truth of his former picture. At the same time he will remind Job of his own insignificance and how limited is his knowledge. He says,

"Dost thou know how God layeth his charge upon them,
And causeth the lightning of his cloud to shine?
Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds,
The wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge?
How thy garments are warm,
When the earth is still by reason of the south wind?
Canst thou with him spread out the sky,
Which is strong as a moulten mirror?
Teach us what we shall say unto him;
For we can not set our speech in order by reason of darkness."

The purpose of the poet in these verses is very evident. In the presence of God's wonderful demonstrations, in the storm and all that is connected with it, man is too insignificant even for thought.

But incidentally Elihu has mingled with his moralizing some fine strokes of poetry. After the storm is over the sky is overcast by a great flood of golden light which seems to spread out the sky like a moulten

mirror. The poet is so true a poet of nature that apparently without thinking about it he has given expression to one of the most characteristic phenomena that follows in the wake of a storm.

But the picture is not yet complete. Another notable change takes place before nature becomes quite tranquil. The brazen firmament gradually softens into a white light, the winds arise and sweep the clouds before them, and in the glow of the evening sunset the north is all aglow with the red streaks of a glorious evening. The picture closes with the magnificent manifestation of the beauties of nature in which the poet sees only the presence of an allwise and beneficent Creator.

"And now men see not the light which is bright in the skies;
But the wind passeth, and cleareth them.
Out of the north cometh golden splendor;
God hath upon him terrible majesty."

Elihu now draws his conclusion in his own characteristic way. In the power and beauty of the storm he has vindicated God's ways with men. It seems to be entirely satisfactory to his way of thinking.

"Touching the Almighty, we can not find him out:
He is excellent in power;
And in justice and plenteous righteousness he will not afflict.
Men do therefore fear him:
He regardeth not any that are wise of heart."

Elihu's poetry has helped to give dignity to his discourse. But in achieving the purpose for which he used it, it must be admitted that he is as far from his goal as he was when he espoused the muse. If any conclusions can be drawn from his long speech it must be something like this: God is past our understanding. He is all powerful, all wise, and all just. His ways are right, and it is the duty of man to accept what God sends without murmuring and without questioning. Man is so insignificant in his sight that he should not look for an explanation of God's providence. It is therefore not for man to understand Jehovah but to fear and tremble before him.

ACT V

The Reconciliation

Chapters XXXVIII–XLII: 1–6

IN THE long discussions through which we have wandered, many tangled threads have been left unentangled. We have seen one question after another raised and discussed, sometimes with vehemence, only at last to be laid aside unsolved. Job's relation to his friends and the cause of his suffering are still enveloped in as deep mystery as at the beginning. His reconciliation with God, the terrible doubt and gloom into which he has been hurled, God's withdrawal and seeming refusal to hear him, are still enshrouded in the deepest gloom. The vindication of God's ways with men, his mysterious providence in the government of the world, are as yet unaccounted for.

All this in spite of the fact that the most earnest and sincere efforts have been made, both on the part of Job and of his comforters, to penetrate the deep things of God. In their quest for solution they have scaled the heights of wisdom, explored the depths of experience, appealed to the teaching of nature and have even undertaken an explanation of the mysteries of divine Providence. They have reasoned and argued. They have philosophized and dreamed. They

have dogmatized and prophesied. Yet in the end they have all been baffled and their theories have led to no satisfactory solution of the problems discussed.

But we should not for a moment think that the writer of the drama has lost his way or does not know what he is about. All the delay and uncertainty in the discussion has been purposed. The great motive of the poem rests in the fact that men in their own wisdom do not understand God. The author of the poem has permitted each of the disputants to go the full length of his ability in trying to solve the deep mystery of God's providence to men. In his own way each has come of his own accord, as it were, face to face with a blank wall beyond which there is no light. This situation has prepared the way for the final solution. The voice of Jehovah speaking from the whirlwind is necessary to lift the veil of obscurity in which the whole is enveloped.

When the reader becomes conscious of this fact, that now Jehovah is to speak in his own person, it is very easy for him to be disappointed in the reply from the whirlwind. We naturally think that the omniscient God will at once clear up all mystery by a deep and wonderful revelation of the mysterious forces of the unseen world. We look for the explanation of spiritual forces which are beyond the understanding of our finite minds. But the voice from the whirlwind undertakes no such revelation. On the contrary it deals with the very common things in the

world of nature around us. There is no special revelation here at all. In fact there is no revelation beyond what a man of average intelligence would be able to see with his own eyes and understand with his own heart without assistance if he would but focus his attention in the right way upon the proper objects. The simplicity of the revelation from the whirlwind surprises us, and yet the more we contemplate it the more conscious we become of the deep and fundamental religious truth that it embodies.

Jehovah's answer is to Job alone, but the answer is suited to the comprehension of every other person as well as Job, and is directed to the understanding, to the intelligence. Job is commanded to summon his faculties, to stand up like a man, to think with all his heart and mind, to think through nature to nature's God, and see in all the common manifestations of nature the handiwork of divine Majesty.

"Who is this that darkeneth counsel
By words without knowledge?"

Jehovah demands of him. There has been much unwisdom spoken in the past discussion. Real wisdom is now to be revealed, but not through the divine voice, except as this directs the eye to see, but as it appears in the manifest handiwork of God in the visible world all around us. The divine revelation to which we finally come, then, is the religious teaching of nature. How simple and yet how natural does this all seem, and at the same time how

conclusive, how wonderful and beautiful in its simplicity.

First Job is pointed to the acts of creation and to the phenomena of nature with a request that, since he has presumed to know a good many things in the past discussion, he explain them. With careful, diligent search into the mysteries of the creative act and into the intricate maze of natural phenomena Job is bidden to look. Here the hand of God is at work. Here the discerning soul will find food for meditation and serious thought, and the more he broods over it, and the deeper he is able to fathom its mystery, the closer will he be led to the Author of all nature. So Job is led to discover for himself the deep truths that he has been searching for in vain, with all sincerity and with all earnestness, but was unable to find because there was no leading hand to guide him to the goal of his quest. The different creative acts and the varied phases of natural phenomena are presented in the form of interrogatories. Job is bidden to contemplate them, to explain their meaning, their purpose or their origin. The method amounts to a sort of reductio ad absurdum, in which the answer to the question proposed by the voice is inevitably and invariably the same: God.

The voice begins,

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of
the earth?
Declare if thou hast understanding.

Who determined the measures thereof, if thou knowest?
Or who stretched the line upon it?
Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened?
Or who laid the cornerstone thereof?''

The answer to all these questions is self-evident. In that far away morning of the world when God laid the foundations of the earth, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy, where was Job? yes, where? And as to the other question, Who determined the measure of the earth, and who gave it its dimensions, who laid the cornerstone of it, and who made sure its foundation? the answer is inevitable; God.

Who was it in that first morning of creation when the earth came forth a molten mass, fresh from the womb of Chaos, that confined its liquid substance in its place? And how were the vaporous clouds enabled to soar off into space as a garment of the earth? Who set the bounds of these various forms of substance, and who decreed the law, ''Thus far shalt thou go and no further?'' God.

Again the voice demands, Have you brought forth the morning since you have lived upon the earth? Have you unrolled the dawn as a great blanket, shaking, as it were, the dust and debris out of the lap of nature? Have you commanded the earth, placed your impress upon it as a die in the clay, or molded it to your use as a garment? Have you penetrated into its dark mysteries and seen what is beyond

the grave? Have you snatched a created world out of the hand of the Creator and stamped upon it the image of your own personality? Whose power is this in the presence of which you stand dumb and impotent? There is only one answer: God.

Have you explored the mysteries of the sea? Have you searched out the bowels of the earth? Do you know what is beyond the gates of death? Have you seen into the mysteries of the world beyond? Do you know the measure of the earth? Can you understand its scope and breadth? How do you explain these mysteries? The only answer is: God.

Do you know where light dwells, where it has its origin? Where is the abode of darkness? Can you explore the bounds of it? From your former statements you must know these things for you are very old and the number of your days is very great. Do you understand how snow is formed? Can you explain the mysteries of the hail? How do you account for the mysteries of light and darkness, of hailstone and snowflake? There is but one answer; God.

Who has determined the channel for the flood of waters, or made a way for the lightning and thunder? Who has led the clouds to deposit their showers on uninhabited lands, or on the wilderness unknown to man? Who has caused the tender grass to spring up? Who has brought forth the dew-drops and the rain? Whence come the ice and the hoar-frost? Who causes the waters to freeze over and become solid like stone? Who brings these things forth? God.

Can you set clusters of stars in the skies like the Pleiades? Or loose the bands of Orion? Can you lead forth the Zodiac with its signs and their seasons, and cause the Great Bear to move in his yearly round about the pole? Do you understand the laws by which the heavens are ruled, and can you establish these laws upon the earth? Whose laws are these? God's.

Can you command the clouds so that they give forth their water at your request? Can you control the lightning and cause it to strike here or there as you may direct? Ah, who can understand the mysterious forces that govern in the world of nature about us, and who can explain the mysterious operations of the mind and show how it knows and judges! Who can explain the processes by which the clouds give forth their waters as from bottles in heaven when the earth is parched and covered with dust, or formed into the hard clods of the valley? Only God.

The omnipotent hand that brings these changes of season, the variation of cloud, sunshine and shower, heat and cold, the conditions that produce our crops and make possible life as we know it upon the earth, is it not the good hand of an all-wise providence that has created the earth and the worlds and that governs all according to a well regulated plan? Should not man therefore who is the chief beneficiary of all this wise providence honor and revere God and trust him completely in all things?

But the voice from the whirlwind continues, and

directs the thought of Job now to a consideration of the animal life which he knows. He is asked to consider the various creatures with reference to their instinctive natures, and is again put upon his metal to endeavor with all his intelligence to trace in the various animal forms the peculiarities of habit, disposition, and instinct, with which they are endowed.

> "Cans't thou hunt the prey for the lioness,
> Or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,
> When they couch in their dens,
> And abide in the covert to lie in wait?
> Who provideth for the raven his prey,
> When his young ones cry unto God,
> And wander for lack of food?"

Whence come the peculiar instincts of the lion tribe, their disposition to crouch in dens, to lie in wait and secretly spring upon their prey? Whence their ravenous appetites and the sagacity with which they can be satiated? Likewise the vultures. Why does the lion refuse to touch a dead body and the vulture make carrion its only food? Man is reduced again to his only answer, God.

Can you explain the nature of the wild goats in their wild recesses of the mountains? Do you understand their times and seasons and their dispositions? How is it that their little ones remain with them for a time, then go away on their own initiative, take life with all its dangers into their own keeping and return no more to the parental fold? Or whose hand

is seen in the disposition of the wild ass who makes his home in the wilderness or in the salt marshes, but scorns the city and the dwelling place of men, delighting in the freedom of the mountains and seeks his food in the large open spaces? Why is it that the wild ox can not be domesticated? Why can not he be trained to do your plowing and to turn his great strength into useful labor? Whence has he derived his wild untamable instincts? Who has given the ostrich its beautiful plumes and at the same time its nature which is void of parental instinct? How is it that it lays its eggs in the sand where wild beasts may devour them and leaves them there without any thought of care or responsibility? Whence come these varied contradictory and conflicting traits and natures? Yes, whence? Except that the omnipotent God has created each according to its own disposition.

Have you given the horse his strength, have you designed his beautiful quivering mane? Have you caused him to leap like the locust and to rejoice in pawing the earth and snorting in the consciousness of his vigorous life? Have you given him his spirit of bravery so that he rejoices in the clash of arms and in the tumult of battle? Have you caused his heart to rejoice at the sound of the trumpet and to delight in carrying his rider into the thick of the fray? Is it by your wisdom that the hawk soars into the sky and takes delight in bathing her breast in the balmy breezes of the south? Is it at your command that the eagle mounts on high, builds her nest

in the inaccessible crags of the mountain whence she looks down upon the world of smaller animals which she makes her prey? Are these the works of your hand? If not, whence are they? From one only possible source; God.

Job is here invited to recognize his place in the ranks of animate life. If an omiscient and omnipotent God has created the various forms of animal life each with its peculiar instincts and nature, endowed them with ability to care for themselves and adapt themselves to the conditions of their existence, has not this same God placed him in the world and determined the conditions under which he lives? It is as if the voice would say, "Consider the ravens, that they sow not, neither reap; which have no store chamber nor barn; and God feedeth them: of how much more value are ye than the birds? . . . . Consider the lilies, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, Oh, ye of little faith?"

Job has made rash statements, he has found fault with God's way of ruling the universe, he has felt that Jehovah is unjust and partial in his treatment of men. He has accused him of being indifferent to the pleadings of his faithful servants. In the wonderful vision presented to him of the divine majesty and power and glory Job is invited to see himself as he really is. If God created such a wonderful uni-

verse of earth, sky, clouds, stars, and expansive space, filled the earth with creatures strong, beautiful, swift, agile, cunning, dexterous, each fulfilling its mission in the great world in its own way, is it not natural that Job should see himself as a part of this great plan? Having contemplated this wonderful panorama unrolled as it were before his vision, he is now asked to express himself in regard to it. "What has now the caviler to say," the one who would contend with the Almighty? If he is disposed to argue with God and question his ways of ruling the world, let him speak.

"Behold I am of small account: what shall I answer
thee?
I lay my hand upon my mouth.
Once have I spoken and I will not answer;
Yea, twice, but I will proceed no further."

Job is not yet fully reconciled. The interrogatories applied to him have almost overwhelmed him. The majesty of Jehovah's works are too wonderful for him to grasp. His mind is confused, his heart is dazed, he stands as it were in the presence of a Majesty so dazzling in its brightness that his senses are confused. He can give no conclusive answer, he hesitates, is uncertain, declines to commit himself. He must have time to collect his faculties and to order his thought.

Further evidence is therefore vouchsafed him. Job does not yet understand his relation to the

divine plan. His attention is called to two of the largest of God's creatures, and their size and strength are the features particularly emphasized. He has not yet perceived the divine hand in their remarkable structure. His conventional conceptions of God he has not been able to adjust to the wonderful revelation of God in nature. While the scene that follows does not rise to the high level of poetic beauty and grandeur of the former scenes, it may be purposely made more concrete and realistic for the purpose of meeting more fully Job's power of comprehension. Speaking again from the whirlwind, Jehovah demands of Job:

"Gird up thy loins now like a man;
I will demand of thee and declare thou unto me.
Wilt thou condemn me that thou mayest be justified?
Or hast thou an arm like God?
And canst thou thunder with a voice like him?"

'Consider now Behemoth, the hippopotamus, one of the creatures which I made along with yourself. Behold his strength and the powerful muscles of his body. He moves about like a force of nature. His legs are like rods of iron, and his bones like tubes of brass. He is the strongest of all my creatures, but I gave him all the strength he has. He goes forth among the beasts of the field as king among them. He lives upon the grass and the flowers of the field, hides in the thicket of the river's brink, and no

matter what comes, whether the wild beast, the flood of rushing waters, or the terrors of a frowning world, he is undismayed, unterrified. So likewise the leviathan, the crocodile. Would you like to have him for a pet, for the amusement of your children? Do you understand his fierce nature, that he can not be taken alive? Have you observed the wonderful structure of his form? Have you considered the terrors of his teeth and his marvelous capacity to devour all his enemies? Have you noted the strong scales of his back, so closely laid upon one another that not even the air can penetrate between them? So invulnerable is he that sword or spear or dart or pointed staff are but the sport of winds applied to him.'

> "He counteth iron as straw,
> And brass as rotten wood. . .
> He beholdeth everything that is high;
> He is king over all the sons of pride."

The world is full of great and wonderful and beautiful creatures that God has made. Each in its own way is directed and animated by the particular instincts and character with which God has endowed it. Each according to its nature serves the purpose of its creation and reflects the wisdom and power of an omnipotent God. But man is the crowning achievement of the entire creative process. He was bidden to occupy the earth and subdue it. All things were put under his feet. He is endowed with a personality and a divine spirit which belong to

none of the others of God's creatures. He can therefore not realize the lofty purpose of his creation by being a mere animal. His soul powers must find expression. He is of the earth, but he is also of heaven; he has an affinity with God.

As the wonderful panorama of the universe is gradually unrolled before Job and he understands its meaning, he becomes able to see his weakness in comparison with God's strength, his finiteness in comparison with God's infinity, his ignorance in comparison with God's omniscience. And this leads the way to reconciliation. As he grows more and more into an understanding of God's dealings with him he becomes more conscious of His near presence, and realizes that He was not so far away as he had thought. God becomes precious and near to him, and he realizes that in his hasty words he had spoken unjustly. Yet in it all he had been honest at heart, had expressed what seemed to him to be the absolute truth, but for want of wisdom he was in many things mistaken. Now he is willing to bow his head and cover his face in the presence of the good and great and righteous God who has dealt so patiently with him. Then Job answered Jehovah and said,

"I know that thou canst do all things,
And that no purpose of thine can be restrained.
Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge?
Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not,

Things too wonderful for me which I knew not.
Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak;
I will demand of thee and declare thou unto me.
I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear;
But now mine eye seeth thee;
Wherefore I abhor myself,
And repent in dust and ashes."

God can do all things; his wonderful works in earth, sky, and heaven, his marvelous creatures upon the earth are a testimony of his greatness. God is not only the Author of a great physical universe but also of settled traits of character, intuitions, mental and spiritual powers, longings, aspirations, hopes and fears. Job's mind now can sweep the universe and see in all its phases the handiwork of an omnipotent and onmiscient God.

In comparison with this he sees himself in his ignorance, limitations, and short-sightedness. "Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge?" he asks. It is himself, in his endeavor to understand God through the agency of a traditional religion. No wonder he uttered what he did not understand, things too wonderful for him which he knew not. He needed to be brought face to face with God in nature, to see his hand in the government of the world, and to read his thoughts in the intricate designs of a boundless universe.

His knowledge of God had been by the hearing of the ear, men's opinions; theories derived from partial views of his providence. Various views of this kind

had been insistently urged by Job's comforters. Theories of religion these were, based on experience, observation, tradition, ancient wisdom, the teachings of the philosophers and mystics. Job, while differing in some respects from his protagonists, nevertheless had the traditional idea of God's government of the world. But now his eyes are opened. He can see God, not in bodily form of course, but a vision of his divine Majesty is present before his soul. He has been lifted up to that new world of divine providence in which all creatures move and have their being. God appears to him as a great Caretaker, interested in all his creatures, directing all things to his honor and glory and for the full working out of the highest destiny of every creature. God has become a majestic Providence in which the deepest yearnings of the soul as well as its highest aspirations are satisfied. Job's soul is at peace in the restful assurance of having come into a reconciled relationship with the omnipotent God whom he had so earnestly sought. His true soul melts in sincere adoration before divine Majesty. His attitude is only worship, adoration, love, repentance. But Job makes no confession of sin, he does not need to. He has been at fault only through ignorance and rashness. He humbly and sincerely confesses his faults, for his heart has always been right. He feels exceedingly small in the presence of the infinite God. He has found the true relationship with his Maker. Now that he is reconciled, the question of his integrity is not raised. He has acquired something even better

than the vindication of his integrity, something which, in a way, also comprehends that, — he has found peace of soul. He has found sweet communion with the divine Spirit. He understands God's ways with man, and appreciates Him as the God and Author of the universe. And this is as full a revelation as could be vouchsafed him before the coming of the Messiah.

The Epilogue

Chapter XLII: 7 – 17

WITH JOB'S confession and reconciliation the drama properly ends, and there may be a question as to the propriety of an epilogue. His spiritual triumph is the object to which we have been looking through the entire play, and it must be confessed that when this is achieved, to go back to a consideration of Job in the light of his temporal prosperity does not exalt the theme. Yet the world in Job's day was practical and looked to practical ends as it does in our day. In fact Job's spiritual victory, while it is the true goal of the motive that rules the drama and therefore the artistic conclusion of the development, leaves inconclusive certain practical considerations that need to be reckoned with, and this fact makes some sort of later consideration necessary.

In the first place our sense of poetic justice demands that certain things be considered further. Job's relation to his three friends is still a matter in question. That matter has been in the foreground of the discussion all through the play. They have taken the attitude of vindicating the good name of Jehovah, and in their way and according to their vision, each has honestly tried to do this. How their

views have clashed with those of Job we have seen in each act. Job's spiritual triumph and reconciliation with God still leaves the friends out of the reckoning. It is not until Jehovah addresses himself to Eliphaz, their leader, that we are finally and authoritatively informed as to how God has looked upon their ministrations. Here we get a general view of the entire controversy as seen from God's standpoint. "Ye have not spoken of me the things that are right, as my servant Job hath," God said to Eliphaz, and before God would accept him and his companions he required the intercession of Job in their behalf.

It therefore requires the epilogue to understand the complete vindication of Job. God has not only accepted him but he has also made him a mediary between himself and the three friends. In doing this he has honored Job above any honor he enjoyed in his former prosperity. There we saw him as a patriarch, ministering in religion it is true, but only as the head of his clan. Now God has constituted him a priest and made him an intercessor for those who had caused him distress; and this seems to have been reserved as the final triumph in both the spiritual and practical sense of Job's spiritual victory. Observe that "Jehovah turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends." It seems that this relationship of the four leading characters of the drama constitutes the significant triumph of the entire dramatic action. Job has not only won out in his own spiritual struggles, but that has capacitated him

for mediatorial service that is even prophetic of the Messiah that was to come.

The final picture of Job's later prosperity is coupled in purpose with his final spiritual triumph with God and with his friends. The statement that "Jehovah gave Job twice as much as he had before" is part of the same declaration that proclaimed his complete spiritual victory. To see Job in his later years receiving his friends and being received by them, their feasting together and their presentation of gifts to him, his multiplied flocks of camels and oxen and sheep, with another splendid family of seven sons and three daughters, the like of whom were not to be found anywhere, and the generous provision for inheritance accepted by the patriarch, and his last long years of peace, prosperity and plenty among his descendants for four generations,—this is a satisfying concrete picture of the reward of fidelity that commends itself to the practical sense of our day as it did to that of Job.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON

The Song of Songs, Which is Solomon's

Introduction

THE FIRST verse of the poem is its title; and it invites comparison with other famous songs of the Bible, as the song of Miriam after crossing the Red Sea and seeing the pursuing Egyptians overwhelmed in its waves; or the song of Moses when at God's command he turned over his commission to Joshua as leader of God's people and gave them his final words of encouragement and instruction; or the song of Deborah when she and Barak had led their people to a successful triumph over the hordes of Midian. But this is the song of songs, the greatest of all the songs, and it is Solomon's.

Just the kind of relationship the song bears to Solomon is not altogether clear. It may be Solomon's song in the sense of his being the author of it, or it may be in the sense that he is the subject of the story. It is generally conceded that the poem is the product of the age of Solomon. If this is true there is little doubt that Solomon is both the author of the poem and likewise its subject. This means that in composing the song Solomon gives a personal record of his courtship of the Shulammite maiden. All things considered, this is the most probable and most natural view to take of the poem.

Several things point to this conclusion. The song was evidently composed in a period of peace and good feeling. It reflects a condition of general satisfaction and prosperity like that which prevailed in the early part of Solomon's reign. And there were very few periods in all the later years of the monarchy that would reflect the tranquil spirit of the poem.

It belongs also to a time of true religious ideals of which the age of Solomon is the best representative in Israelitish history. The religious sentiment of the poem is in accord with such motives as led the young King to Gibeon in the early years of his reign. It is infused with a spirit of singular nobility of thought and purity of sentiment.

The numerous nature references are also in keeping with the record of Solomon's interest in these things, as given in First Kings 4:33. The names of eighteen plants have been noted in the short poem, and thirteen animals. Place references are likewise frequent, as mountains, cities, plains, rivers, pasture regions, and many of them definitely localized by reference to the plants and animals found there. Frequent reference is also made to spices, perfumes, and aromatic herbs, such as formed an important element of the commerce of Solomon's age. All of these references point unerringly to the age of Solomon as the time of the poem and to the king himself as its author.

The work is dramatic in form, as is shown by the fact that all of the language is spoken. It is a direct

utterance of one or another of the characters in the play. Just who the speaker is on every occasion may not always be beyond question, as the speakers are nowhere named and the parts are not assigned. There is a certain difficulty, therefore, in the interpretation, and various methods of resolving the meaning of the poem have been employed. It is possible to conceive of a tolerably elaborate cast of characters and a complex machinery of plot. But this is not at all necessary. The method of interpretation here used is simple and natural. King Solomon, the royal wooer, frequently referred to as a shepherd, the royal Shepherd of Israel; the Shulammite maiden, the object of his affection, designated the bride; a chorus of young ladies, the daughters of Jerusalem; a group of citizens of Jerusalem; and the brothers of the bride; — these are all the characters necessary to account adequately for all the incidents of the story. And our interpretation is based on the assumption that this is the proper dramatis personae of the play.

From early times it has been customary among Jewish interpreters to read an allegorical meaning into the poem. They have seen in the king a type of Jehovah. In his ardent wooing is reflected the earnest spirit of God in behalf of his own. The bride symbolizes the Jewish church. Her beauty and spotless purity are types of that spiritual perfection which was the ideal of the faithful in Israel. And their union is the consummation of the spiritual kingdom in this world.

Christian scholars have, as a rule, accepted this interpretation as applying to the ancient conditions under which the poem was written, but extend the meaning to apply in our day to the church of Jesus Christ. This view finds support in the visions of the writer of the Apocalypse, in which the Christian church is presented as a bride, the wife of the Lamb of God. The personification in the two instances resemble each other, and this interpretation has generally been accepted.

It should be pointed out, however, that in the poem itself there is no hint whatever of such an allegorical meaning. But the poem has frequently been spoken of as the Apocalypse of the Old Testament. As the Apocalypse of the New consists largely of visions, figures, images, in almost confusing splendor, if the song holds a similar relation to the Old Testament, it is natural to think of it as likewise rich in imagery and Apocalyptic figures.

Our interpretation has left this allegorical feature entirely out of the question. The story is sufficiently beautiful, sweet, and noble in itself to deserve a place in the sacred canon without any allegorical significance. The splendid vision of life, the fine presentation of character, the beautiful sentiment, and the lofty motive that dominates the song — all invest it with a tone of moral worth that stamp it with the quality of immortality.

SCENE I 1:2 – 2:7

Royal Love Making

WE ARE to suppose that King Solomon, in the early part of his reign, is on a camping expedition in the beautiful valley of Jezreel with a company from the royal household. The season is the spring of the year when the landscape is covered with flowers and when all nature is at its best. The royal pavilion has been spread in the valley and is in the keeping of a group of maidens who perform the Chorus of the play. King Solomon has been roving about the country on foot and has met with a beautiful young girl of the neighborhood with whom he has fallen violently in love. He has visited her in her cottage home, as we shall see later, and by the time the dramatic action begins she has been brought to the royal pavilion in the valley.

At the opening of the first scene she has just arrived at the encampment and is conversing with the daughters of Jerusalem. The king for the time being is absent. The maiden is bashful and timid and feels herself somewhat out of place in the midst of the royal splendor. The young ladies of the Chorus treat her considerately and try to relieve her embarrassment.

They begin by speaking of the king in his absence. Verses two, three and four form a prologue to the

later action. Evidently there is a leader of the Chorus who sometimes speaks in her own behalf and at other times the group speak in concert. This accounts for the somewhat confusing use of the singular and plural forms of the pronoun. Verses two and three are spoken by the leader of the Chorus about the absent king, but the thought expressed is applicable to the entire body. The extreme frankness of the language used throughout the play may strike us as unusual. It would be unusual in a sophisticated society like our own, but in a primitive society, as here represented, we should have no difficulty in understanding that people are likely to say about what they think.

The Chorus leader begins,

> "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth;
> For thy love is better than wine.
> Thine oils have a goodly fragrance;
> Thy name is as oil poured forth;
> Therefore do the virgins love thee."

There is doubtless a climax intended in this language. This is the language of love, and love expressed in kisses is better than wine or any other food or drink. The royal oils and ointments also have a sweet fragrance, but the very name of the king has a fragrance and a potency beyond all cosmetics. Therefore the virgins love him because of his affection and his worth.

The fourth verse is addressed by the Chorus to the

maiden. The language is still the language of affection, as we sometimes sing, "Draw me nearer, nearer." "We will run after thee," implies their willingness to serve and honor the newcomer and welcome her to their midst. They regard her as one of their number, altho superior. She is to be the subject of glad conversation among them and will rightly be regarded as the object of their love and devotion.

At verse five the maiden first speaks. She confesses her swarthy complexion and modestly admits her natural beauty, comparing herself to the dark tents of the Arabs and to the pavilion of the king in which they are now housed. She is evidently conscious of the marked contrast between her own rustic appearance and that of the maidens from the royal palace. She proceeds to explain her dark complexion. She has been much in the hot sun, her brothers have placed upon her the keeping of the paternal vineyards. This was due doubtless, not so much because of any cruelty or harshness in their disposition, as to a desire to keep her employed as a safeguard against idleness and vice. Her life has therefore been spent much out of doors. She has doubtless been faithful in her care of the family property, but there is one vineyard she has not kept. In this sly reference she probably means her own heart. This the king has stolen away from her.

Thus far she has spoken to the daughters of Jerusalem, the Chorus. She now turns to speak to the king in his absence. "Oh, thou whom my soul

loveth," are terms of the most endearing friendship. Here she thinks of the king as a shepherd. Where is he feeding his flock in her absence? Where is he leading them to the shadiest nooks for rest in the heat of the day? Why should she be as one that is veiled, that is, cut off from his presence? She is out of place here in the royal pavilion, in the midst of court ladies. It would be more seemly for her to be out in the pastures tending the sheep with the man whom her soul loves.

The Chorus, taking up her figure, reply, in a very courteous manner but probably with a tinge of sarcasm, that if she does not know where her royal shepherd is she might follow the sheep tracks that lead out into the pastures and there find the king and help to feed the flock beside the shepherd's tents.

The king first enters at verse nine. He has of course met the maiden on former occasions and wooed her in her own home, but this is their first appearance together since she came to the encampment. His first address to her is therefore not as abrupt as it would otherwise seem.

> "I have compared thee, oh my love,
> To a steed in Pharaoh's chariots,"

he remarks. This is bold imagry but perfectly natural. The king is referring to her natural, noble beauty. We may well imagine that the horses employed in the royal chariots of the Egyptian monarch were the most beautiful, stylish and perfect speci-

mens to be found. And when we reflect that Solomon introduced from Egypt the first horses into Israel and the pride taken in them, this language becomes perfectly natural in his mouth.

The Chorus seem eager also to express their feeling of admiration for the comely young woman. But their ideas of beauty are derived from another source, and it may be that their first comments are based upon the rustic decorations with which the maiden came from her cottage home. The plaits of hair hanging down over her cheeks probably refer to the natural manner in which she wore her tresses while caring for the vineyard at home, and the strings of jewels about her neck may have been the simple peasant decorations with which she came to the royal pavilion. This seems the more natural to suppose in light of the eleventh verse, where the daughters of Jerusalem declare that they will make for her "plaits of gold with studs of silver." They agree that her natural beauty should be adorned with rich jewels becoming the royal society.

While the king and the maidens thus commend her beauty she has doubtless sat in bashful confusion, but she answers in a manner worthy of the royal esteem. While the king sat at his table she anointed him with her most fragrant perfume, probably as a natural expression of her love, as Mary later did her blessed Lord out of a similar motive. While the spikenard filled the room with its fragrance, it was only a symbol of her affection. The king is to her as a bundle of myrrh or a bouquet of sweet scented

flowers lodged in her bosom; or to change the figure, as a cluster of henna flowers, the sweet scented cypress. These grow in abundance in the tropical climate of Engedi on the western coast of the Dead Sea. The imagery of her speech is that the king's presence is to her as a sweet and rich perfume that envelopes everything in its fragrance.

Beginning at the fifteenth verse we have a beautiful picture of royal love making. The scene is no longer within the tent of the king, but upon the green grass at the edge of the forest. Says the king,

> "Behold thou art fair, my love;
> Behold thou art fair;
> Thine eyes are as doves."

This is a simple commendation of her beauty, her comeliness of form, and her natural grace and charm. But the next line refers to her disposition; her mild and gentle eyes are like those of the dove, sympathetic, kind and sincere.

She replies,

> "Behold thou art fair my beloved, yea pleasant;
> Also our couch is green."

She, in turn, commends his natural beauty, but his attraction is not restricted to this. He is pleasant to be with, gracious, noble, with a pleasing personality. She enjoys his companionship. As if abashed at her frankness she changes the subject. Looking about she remarks upon the beautiful greenery all around.

The little hillock where they are sitting is like a couch in a large room covered with a green carpet.

Taking up her suggestion the king replies, 'Yes this is a stately house. The trunks of these great cedars are the columns and pillars that support it, and the branches of the towering firs form the stately roof that overarches us.'

This image suggests another from the maiden, 'And I am a rose of Sharon, a wild flower of the forest growing here beneath these stately trees. I am a lily of the valley, a timid little flower growing in obscurity in these deep shades, a wild sweet-scented blossom of the woods.'

But the love banter continues. 'As a lily among thorns and brambles and underbrush — tender and sweet and lovely — so are you among all other women. You may be a wild flower but you have a native grace and loveliness that distinguishes you from all others.'

Once more rising to the occasion the maiden replies,

> "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood,
> So is my beloved among the sons."

The king is more than merely agreeable and handsome. He is compared to the fruitful tree, fragrant and beautiful in the spring with blossoms, later loaded with luscious health-giving fruit. As compared with the other trees, merely ornamental or of commercial value, he is both ornamental and useful.

As if abashed and probably surprised at her own resourcefulness she recoils and muses upon the occasion. Her thoughts seem to run in this manner. 'I came into the tent of the great king and have found him pleasant and agreeable. He is entertaining and instructive. He is altogether lovely. He brought me to the banqueting house and the banner that floats over us is a banner of love. I have been so much engrossed in pleasant conversation in his company that I have almost forgotten to eat. Nourish me, therefore, with pleasant fruits, with clusters of raisins and with apples, for I am languishing in love. I feel about me his tender embraces which ravish my heart.' This is the ecstacy of affection.

Turning now to the Chorus,

> "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
> By the roes or by the hinds of the field,
> That ye stir not up nor awake my love,
> Until he please."

This is a sort of refrain that closes several of the scenes. It shows the solicitous feeling of the maiden for her royal wooer. It has been suggested that the Shulammite is Abishag, the nurse of David in his old age. The suggestion receives some probability from the nurse-like attitude that she seems to take towards her wooer. She would sit guard over him in his slumbers, and adjures the Chorus by the roes and hinds of the mountain that they must not disturb him until he awakes of his own accord.

Scene II 2:8–3:5

Reminiscence of a Royal Courtship

THE second scene records two monologues of the maiden addressed to the Chorus. They are reminiscences of the courtship previous to that recorded in scene one. The royal party must be understood to have been in the neighborhood for sometime, and the king has met the beautiful maiden doubtless on several occasions. Chapter two from verse eight to the end records a visit paid to the maiden in her own home. In verses eight and nine she recalls very vividly how he climbed up the steep mountain path to her father's humble cottage. She heard him coming in the distance as it were "leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills," climbing over the rough boulders, and rounding the sharp crags. She thinks of him as like a young roe, or a young hart, in his nimble activity. But the winding path has finally led him to the cottage. She sees him standing beyond the wall of the house, looking in at the window, using every avenue of observation to locate her. He glances through the lattice work eager to discover whether the object of his visit is within.

Before his approach to the portal of the cottage, however, she recalls the beautiful song he sang, a song of love and nature, a song of budding love. And it is one of the most beautiful of its kind in all literature.

"Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.
For, lo, the winter is past;
The rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land;
The fig tree ripeneth her green figs,
And the vines are in blossom;
They give forth their fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

She remembers this song and how sweetly it rang in her ears from a distance. But now the royal wooer comes nearer. He comes up to the very threshold of the cottage, and addresses her in terms of endearment. She is as a dove in the clefts of the rock. Her father's cottage, hidden away on the steep rugged mountain side, suggests this bold imagery. It is in the covert of a steep place. He calls for her now to come out to him that he may see her face and hear her sweet voice, both of which are pleasing and delightsome to him.

She replies by singing a snatch from a popular ballad.

"Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes,
They that spoil the vineyards;
For our vineyards are in blossom."

This is an undoubted reference to her rural occupation, to which she referred in the first scene. She is made responsible for the care of the vineyard. She

can not answer to the call of her lover to go away for a stroll with him unless the little foxes are caught, or driven away. She acknowledges her devotion to him and accepts him as her lover, but she can not leave her work now even to entertain the king.

She therefore sends him away to amuse himself among the flowers and the flocks until her work is finished.

"Until the day be cool, and the shadows flee away,
Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart
Upon the mountains of Bether."

The mountains of Bether are undoubtedly the Bethron just across the Jordan from where the royal camp was pitched. This is a broken hilly section used extensively for pasturage and was well known to the rustic maiden. The stroll must be put off till the day is cool and the shadows flee away.

The second monologue is the record of a dream, and seems to have no basis in fact such as the first had. The maiden relates how upon her bed by night she imagined herself as going in quest of him whom her soul loved. She had temporarily been separated from the object of her affection and imagines herself going in search of him but not able to find him.

In her dream she says to herself,

"I will rise now and go about the city;
In the streets and in the broad ways
I will seek him whom my soul loveth."

In her dream-quest she seeks him in the streets, in the parks, in the public squares, but all in vain. She inquires of the watchmen but they can give her no helpful information. She turns away from them with a sad heart but refuses to give up the search.

She has, however, scarcely more than left the policeman when she comes suddenly upon the object of her quest. She eagerly siezes him and will not let him go. She clings to him and brings him to her mother's house, into the very chamber in which she had first seen the light of day. She thinks of this as the center and sanctum sanctorum of the household. This imagery is employed for the purpose of emphasizing the ardent devotion with which she is again united with the object of her affection.

The scene closes with the same adjuration that closes the first scene. The words are identical and represent a similar condition. Having recovered, in imagination, her lost lover she is unwilling that their happy tranquility shall be interrupted even by a song from the royal Chorus.

Scene III 3:6–5:1

A Bridal Procession and Royal Espousals

THUS far the scene of the dramatic action has been in the north country, in the neighborhood of the maiden's home. Now it shifts to Jerusalem where the next scene takes place. The preliminary wooing is at an end. The royal party return to the palace, but not until the king's suit has been successfully terminated.

The maiden is to be conveyed to the king's palace in a stately procession. This is doubtless after the royal party had returned. Elaborate preparations have been made and the procession is attended with pomp and splendor. As the brilliant cavalcade approaches Jerusalem a group of citizens observe it in the distance. It comes up towards the capitol, as it were, out of the wilderness, out of the open country, the rich pasture lands sloping off toward the Jordan. The procession is accompanied by pillars of smoke, clouds of incense rising from the fragrant herbs burned about the royal litter. The rich fragrance of the myrrh and frankincense fills the air and blends with the odors of other oriental spices, which form a chief commodity of the commerce from the orient. The question naturally in the mind of the observers

is, who is this that cometh up from the wilderness in such pomp and splendor?

On closer view the citizens recognize the carriage of their king, and the king's body guard accompanying it. They remember them as the loyal soldiers of the monarch, skilled in handling the sword, expert in war. They note that every man has his weapons upon him, indicating that every precaution has been taken on the journey so as not to be taken unawares in the night. The cavalcade had been strongly armed and carefully guarded.

Having recognized the royal litter, the men begin to comment upon it. They remember that King Solomon had this particular conveyance built of wood from the Lebanon mountains. The pillars supporting the roof are decorated with silver. They support a canopy of gold. The seat is cushioned with the royal purple and is decorated with all that love can devise. The adornment is provided by the Chorus, the daughters of Jerusalem, indicating the beautiful spirit existing between them and the maiden and banishing all thought of jealousy or ill will.

As the procession approaches the palace the citizens call to the daughters of Zion to go forth and behold the king. While the occasion is the arrival of the Shulammite maiden, the king is the center of attraction and the center of interest. The daughters of Zion are a body of court ladies who have remained at the palace and represent a different group from the Chorus who are always designated as the daughters of Jerusalem. The daughters of Zion go forth

to welcome the royal procession. The king appears wearing the crown which his mother, the beautiful Bathsheba, placed upon his head. This crowning was not in relation to his accession to the throne but on the event of his espousal to the Shulammite damsel, the day of the gladness of his heart.

The royal procession enters the palace. After an interval of rest and refreshment the royal wooer is again disclosed with the object of his affection. The scene is one of the rooms of the palace, or the palace grounds near by. The king is all ardor and devotion. He comments upon the beauty of the maiden, drawing bold images of her beauty from various objects about him. "Behold thou art fair, my love; behold thou art fair." The description of beauty that follows is only an elaboration of this sentiment.

In her eyes he sees again the soft gentle look of love, which reveals a quiet spirit and affectionate disposition. Her hair reminds him of a flock of goats lying along the side of Mt. Gilead. The point in the comparison doubtless is the numerousness of the objects. As the great flocks seem to cover the mountain side, so her beautiful locks cover her comely head. Her teeth are like flocks of sheep just come up from the washing, white as snow, appearing always in groups of two in which none are wanting. The pearly whiteness of the teeth, the regularity of their form, and the fact that none are missing, are the objects in the comparison. Her lips are a thread of scarlet which make the mouth comely, and the blue veins of her temple appear in patches of beauty between the

comely locks. The bold arch of the neck reminds him of the tower of David rising above the walls of Jerusalem, and the jewels about her neck suggest the armor that is frequently hung about the tower. Her entire form is a perfect model of comeliness and beauty. The beauty here referred to is the beauty of nature, charm, grace, and native dignity.

At this point she interrupts her royal suitor and dismisses him. She wishes to be alone. Until the cool of the evening comes on she will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense. This is doubtless some nook or enclosure in the palace grounds made fragrant by sweet-scented herbs and flowers. Alone with the meditations of her heart, we can imagine the rustic maiden in this new environment to have enough to occupy her thoughts.

Evening has come and the royal suitor resumes his wooing. The scene is doubtless a room in the palace. As in the preceding scene, he begins with a compliment to the beauty of the maiden, but the tone is more ardent. Then she was spoken of as "fair," now she is "all fair" and the additional thought is added, "There is no spot in thee." It is not only her beauty that is now commended but her goodness, her purity.

The eighth verse is an ardent exhortation of the king to the maiden to give up her northern home, her kindred and friends, and to live only for him and with him at Jerusalem. Now for the first time he calls her his bride. This means that the nuptial vows have been sealed and the royal espousals are

consummated. The mention of four mountain peaks in the neighborhood of her former home from the summits of which she is bidden to take a survey is probably intended to suggest the rough wild country infested with beasts of prey, which she is bidden to leave for the more attractive and gay life of the palace.

But he returns again to the charms of his sister-bride. It is no longer the charms of physical beauty, upon which he had dwelt in the former scene, but rather those of character and sentiment that he now commends. The gentle loving expression of her eyes has ravished his heart, and the rich jewel at her throat is a symbol of her modest demeanor and her priceless worth. How beautiful is her sincere affection. How much better these endearments of character and nobility of nature than any material thing with which they could be compared. They are as a rich fragrance, suggestive of the noblest purity. Her tongue is as the pure droppings of the honey comb, the very essence of sweetness; such comfort, such consolation, such purity of motives, such nobility of sentiment is in her words. The very fragrance of the Lebanon mountains seems to exude from her presence.

The imagery is again changed, and now to the idea of goodness and purity is added the thought of holiness. The bride is as an enclosed garden jealously guarded against all violence, and abounds in rich fruits and spices and springs of living water. The imagery reminds one of the description of Paradise. The henna and spikenard plants and other rich perfumes typify the fragrance of a noble, holy life. It

is as a sealed fountain, a well of living waters, issuing in a stream of true and noble living.

She answers briefly, and her answer is a prayer. She invokes the north wind and the south wind to come and blow upon her garden, continuing the imagery of her suitor. It is a wish that all that her espoused husband hopes of her may be fully realized. She prays that the powers of heaven may bring to fruition those noble traits of character for which she has been commended. It is the wish not primarily to possess these graces for her own enjoyment but that her espoused may realize in her life and companionship all the happiness and satisfaction that his heart has anticipated.

The king's reply is alike commendatory. His highest expectations are realized. The richest graces of character and the truest ideals of companionship, symbolized by the myrrh and the spice, are his, and nothing has been found disappointing or unworthy. In the rich garden of his enjoyment he has eaten the honeycomb with the honey. All has been happiness without alloy. The address to friends at the close of the section indicates the presence of others which suggests the scene of a banquet. The scene closes in the loftiest strain of loyal affection and pure joy of heart.

Scene IV 5:2–6:9

Misgivings and Confidences of Wedded Love

AN interval of time must be understood to intervene between the preceeding scene and this one. Verses two to seven record another troubled dream of the bride. The dream is similar to one recorded before, but has a deeper tone of sadness than the former. It seems to arise out of a slight misunderstanding or estrangement that sweeps over her soul. A passing doubt separates her from the companionship of her beloved. But her fidelity to him is unshaken and his love for her is unabated.

"I was asleep but my heart waked." This is a poetical way of saying that she dreamed. She seemed to hear the voice of her beloved requesting that she open the door to admit him. The request is accompanied by the usual terms of endearment and suggests the absolute confidence of the king in her loyalty and fidelity of character. The reference to his hair being wet with the dews of the night indicate that he has been out all the night long. In her subconscious mind she hears his voice and hears his knocking for entrance but is not sufficiently conscious of the meaning of it all to give an intelligent reply, so she answers by giving trivial excuses. She has put off her garment

and how shall she put it on. She has bathed her feet, how shall she soil them upon the floor. These are the half conscious excuses that rise in her mind ere she becomes awake.

But the bridegroom can not so easily be turned from his purpose. He reaches in through the opening of the oriental housedoor to remove the bolt of the lock. He fingers the lock but does not remove the bolt. By this time she has awakened and her heart is all aglow with the thought of his return. She hastily arises to open the door. She takes hold of the same bolt that he has fingered and her hand at once becomes fragrant from the fragrance left there by the loving touch of his hand. This is a beautiful symbolism of the sincere and true devotion of his spirit in seeking to reenter his home. All that he touched was left fragrant with the aroma of his presence.

But when she joyfully opens the door he is not there. He has withdrawn himself and is gone. She now thinks of herself as going out into the street in quest of him, as in the former dream, but is unable to find him. She calls for him, he gives no answer. The watchmen find her. They treat her cruelly, tearing the veil from her face and wounding her. It is not only a fruitless quest but ends in disappointment and suffering. It is all very real to her, however. As she narrates the dream to the daughters of Jerusalem, after she is fully awake, she puts them under oath that in case they find her beloved they will tell him she is sick of love.

In this scene a slight vein of romance is evidently

interwoven, which suggests the idealism of pure literature. The facts of history are viewed in the light of their poetical setting. Without doing violence to the facts of the story the theme rises on the wings of imaginative charm into the realm of universal experience and pure poetry.

The recital of the dream with its accompanying adjuration leads to a conversation between the Chorus and the bride.

"What is thy beloved more than another beloved,
O thou fairest among women?"

the Chorus demand. Why this solemn adjuration and this excited manner?

The answer gives the bride an opportunity to describe the charms of her lover, somewhat on the lines of his description of her. Verses ten to sixteen form this description. The imagry is bold and striking, as usual, and the statements altogether frank. Most of the comment is figurative but the comparisons are natural. His white and ruddy complexion suggests a picture of physical beauty and health. "He is the chiefest among ten thousand," doubtless referring to his military bearing and fine manly physique. The comparison of his head to the finest gold relates to its preciousness. The bushy locks as "black as a raven" are indications of healthy vigor and manly beauty. The reference to his eyes is more obscure, but the meaning may be something like this. As white doves sitting quietly by the placid brook are objects of

tranquil peace, so his eyes look love and kindness from the precious brow in which they are set as jewels. His cheeks are glowing and ruddy like a bed of flowers and his gentle words are as pure as the lily and as soothing and sweet as the richest perfume. His hands and his body, symbolized by rich jewels, are lovely and precious. His very aspect is majestic as Lebanon, noble and stately as the lofty cedar. The words of his mouth are gentle and kind. But why continue this inventory? His beauties and his virtues can not be told. He is altogether lovely. This is a description sufficiently characteristic to distinguish him; and this is the description of her lover, her jewel, her friend.

The daughters of Jerusalem repeat their inquiry, "Whither is thy beloved gone? Where is he? If we knew where to seek we would try to help you find him."

She is not at a loss as to his whereabouts.

"My beloved is gone down to his garden,
To the beds of spices,
To feed in the gardens and to gather lilies.
I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine;
He feedeth his flock among the lilies."

This is pure poetry, and it suggests to us that the entire scene of her troubled dream and her adorable description of her lover is not to be taken too seriously as matter of fact. The theme has risen above a record of actual experience into the truer record of universal

experience. This is literature, and it is life at its truest.

The previous discussion has led up to the finding of the beloved. Thus invoked he enters, and his first words are the stereotyped formula used at the beginning of three conversations before: "Thou art fair, O my love." But as in former appearances the imagery is again varied. Here the beauty of the bride as suggested by comparing her with the two most beautiful cities of Palestine, Tirzah, an old Canaanitish capitol, and Jerusalem the city of the great king, suggests a magnificance and splendor not hitherto implied. The further touch suggested by an army on the march with floating banners adds to the gorgeousness of the picture. Here the beauty of the bride is that of a conquering, compelling sort, that which brings her admirer to her feet in worshipful reverence and awe.

Under this influence he begs her to turn her eyes away. He can not endure her awe-inspiring gaze. It has completely overcome him. In his subjection he muses upon the beauties of her form and feature in the identical words of a former description. These have been sufficiently remarked upon.

The king is now in a mood to compare his bride with the other candidates for her place of honor. "There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number." This may be a literal statement of fact at the time of the story. Each one of these would crave that first place of honor in the royal household which has been accorded the

rustic maiden. But among them all she is the one, the chosen one, the honored one, the gentle dove-like perfect one, who surpasses all others. She is also the favorite of her mother, and even her rivals at the palace look upon her and bless her and praise her as worthy of her place of distinction.

Scene V 6:10 – 8:4

The Lure of Beauty and of Home

"WHO is she that looketh forth as the morning,
Fair as the moon,
Clear as the sun,
Terrible as an army with banners?"

This is a chant of the Chorus as the bride, on a bright spring morning, comes forth with all the freshness and beauty of her young life. The imagery is sparkling with dewy freshness. It is the beauty of nature, heavenly beauty, which radiates from her countenance and the grace and charm of her personality. She greets the maidens of the Chorus with a courteous smile and rewards their praise by narrating an incident in her early life. As a rustic maiden in her father's cottage, she went down at this same season of the year to the garden of nuts and herbs, to see how the plants were growing, whether the vine was putting forth its buds, and whether the pomegranates were in blossom. The care of the garden, as we have already seen, was her assigned portion of the domestic duties. As she went about her humble tasks a great experience came into her life. Before she was aware of it, she was set among the chariots of her people to rule in a place of leadership among them. Of course she refers to her first meeting with the king who has advanced her to the position besides himself in honor.

Having recited this story she turns to pass from them. Again they chant:

"Return, return, O Shulammite;
Return, return, that we may look upon thee."

Her companionship, as her beauty and charm of manner, all make her presence agreeable, and the maidens of the Chorus loath to see her leave them.

She replies courteously, wondering why they desire to look upon an inhabitant of her little provincial town, with which she instinctively connects the dance of Mahanaim. The implication is clear that the Chorus has requested her to give for their entertainment an exhibition of this ancient dance.

Just what the dance of Mahanaim was is not very well known. The name is undoubtedly derived from the city of Mahanaim, which was intimately associated with Hebrew life. It was here, or near here, that Jacob was reconciled to his father-in-law Laban after his departure from Padanaram. Here also began his reconciliation with Esau. Later Mahanaim became one of the Levitical cities, and at the time of the poem was closely identified with the life of the Jews. The dance of Mahanaim was almost certainly some sort of religious festival, probably dating back to an ancient origin. It was of a popular character and may have been of the nature of a folk dance. It undoubtedly perpetuated some local occurrence, which, through succeeding generations, had developed into a sacred legend.

The dance is not described, although the first five verses of the seventh chapter record a song that was sung by the Chorus as an accompaniment. The song, as a sort of chant, comments upon the graces of the bride in rendering the dance. The description does not vary greatly from that formerly given by the king, except that here we see her charms exhibited in the motion of the performance. Beginning with her sandled feet, her bodily charms and graces of movement are delineated, culminating with the flowing locks of her hair as fitting snares with which to captivate a king.

At this point the king again enters repeating once more his delight in her beauty. His thought however passes at once to the commendation of her worth, the solid comfort she has brought into his life by her pleasing and delightful society. To make his thought concrete he compares her to the stately palm, a clinging vine, and the apple tree, symbolizing by these objects her graceful beauty, her tender affection, and the rich fruit of her personality and character. Her speech like the flowing of sweet wine —

Here she abruptly breaks into his laudation, takes the words out of his mouth and finishes the sentence with a reference to his own delight in the beverage with which he has compared her words. She acknowledges that she is all in all his, but implies that he talks too much about it. At the same time she is conscious that his affection for her is as deep and full and complete as hers for him can possibly be.

This mutual regard is a fitting mood in which she

may present a request, a deep wish of her heart. This is her desire to pay a visit to her former home in the company of the king.

"Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field;
Let us lodge in the villages.
Let us get up early to the vineyards;
Let us see whether the vine hath budded,
And its blossom is open,
And the pomegranates are in flower:
There will I give thee my love."

She has become tired of court life. She longs for the simplicity and freedom of her childhood days. She would wander forth with her royal lover, through the open fields, lodging in the villages, enjoying his companionship without restraint. She had been conveyed to Jerusalem in great state and in a great throng. She would return in quiet simplicity, unheralded, in keeping with her former shepherd life, which she enjoyed and still loves. She would lead her lord to the vineyard she attended as a girl, see the vines budding forth again, as they did in that other sweet springtime when he had wooed her there. And in the midst of these former scenes, fragrant with the blossoms and the pomegranates, she would seal again her sacred vows of love to him.

The fragrance of the mandrakes, apples of love, suggests to her how welcome their visit will be in the home of her mother. Here will be all manner of precious fruits already laid up in anticipation of the

visit, and in the glad summertime which is to follow there will be others to gather.

"O that thou wert as my brother," she says, addressing her beloved. 'If you were my own brother the son of my mother, how free and familiar could be our association in the old rustic home. Then I could freely kiss you and caress you and none would think ill of me for so doing.' Here simple, chaste, noble love for him so frankly avowed is untouched by any taint of suspicion or worldly passion.

She would take her royal spouse into her mother's humble home where they could be perfectly happy, untrammeled by the formal etiquette and decorum of the court. Her mother would instruct her how to demean herself toward him. In the absence of servants she would herself bring him the spiced wine and the juice of her pomegranates to drink. Their stay in the old home would be filled with ease and comfort and soul satisfaction.

Turning now to the Chorus the bride reminds them that under such circumstances it would be perfectly proper that her lord should embrace her, and that expressions and tokens of love would be their free and liberal privilege.

In such a setting she would make herself responsible for the peace and rest and comfort of him whom she loves. Therefore, in the language she addressed to the Chorus on two former occasions, she adjures them not to disturb nor interrupt the free course of their happy associations in any unnecessary way.

Scene VI 8:5 – 14

The Rewards of Virtue

THE bride's glowing picture of a joyous visit to her mother's home is to be realized; and the scene now changes from the royal palace to the fresh out of doors of the Lebanon region. One beautiful spring evening when the family have gathered around the cottage veranda they behold two foot travelers wending their way slowly up the hillside towards the rustic abode.

"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness,
Leaning upon her beloved?"

The bride is again approaching her old home, leaning upon the arm of her royal husband. They walk slowly along the rugged path, observing closely every familiar object, and pausing now and then to examine some point of interest made sacred by former associations. At length they come to the old apple tree by the wayside, the trysting place of their early love. Here they had sat together and talked together. It was a sacred place, sanctified by holy associations and tender memories. Every object awakens fond recollections.

The situation grows tenser and tenser with emotion.

The bride's feelings overrun with joy. She pours out her soul in rapturous desire.

"Set me as a seal upon thy heart,
As the seal upon thy arm:
For love is strong as death;
Jealousy is cruel as Sheol;
The flashes thereof are flashes of fire,
A very flame of Jehovah.
Many waters can not quench love,
Neither can floods drown it;
If a man would give all the substance of his house
for love,
He would utterly be contemned."

In this rapturous utterance an affection pure and sacred finds consummate expression. It is a holy, sanctified love, typifying the immaculate purity of the spiritual bride as related to her husband. She would be a seal upon his heart and a sign upon his arm, a steadying and staying power in his life, a constant presence to help, to exalt, to ennoble.

The symbolism of the language, too, is majestic in its suggestiveness. Love is strong as death, perverted love cruel as hell, and expresses itself in flashes from the infernal pit. But love is undying, it is an eternal flame from Jehovah. Floods of water can not quench it, and if one should give all that he possesses in the world for it, his gift would be most despicable. It is the thought of the great apostle, when he said, "Tho I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and tho I give

my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

In this noble expression the poem reaches its climax. There is nothing more to be said on the main theme, but there are other considerations that help to set forth the true dignity of the work, and bring into full view the solid basis of moral principle upon which it is constructed. In presenting these matters of domestic interest a fine cadence is secured, and the theme is restored from the lofty rapture of pure delight to the more practical details of complete living.

The royal pair have been received into the mountain home. The greetings have been cordial and sincere; love flows like a river. The formality of court life is forgotten. The family circle draw up their chairs around the old hearthstone and the familiar home interests are discussed without reserve. It is this picture of the happy family group discussing the interests of their own hearth and home that justifies the addition of this last scene.

In one of these conversations, when the king is doubtless absent, the early life of the bride and her brothers is under discussion. We have already seen the practical interest of her brothers in her welfare as a girl. The same question is again a matter of interest to them. They have another sister just growing into young womanhood. The brothers and mother are anxiously seeking counsel of the elder sister in her behalf. She has had experience, large and varied. What practical suggestions does she have for the bringing up of her younger sister?

The answer seems to be suggested by the brothers, and is given in the form of a parable. It may represent the conclusion reached after an informal discussion of the matter by the group. "If she is a wall, steadfast in chastity and virtue, one on whom no light advances can be made," then they will honor and exalt her, as if by building to her memory a monument with turrets of silver. But "if she be a door, lightminded and accessible to seduction," then she will be confined behind closed doors with boards of cedar.

This naturally leads to a declaration from the bride. Her life has been as a wall, a tower of strength, a fortified castle, secure against even a thought of impurity; and it is because of her spotless purity that she has been exalted and honored in the world. It was for this that "in his eyes she was as one that had found peace." It was her virtue that exalted her to be queen. Her experience is a concrete example of the practical worth of true and noble living.

She illustrates the principle in another way. Solomon has a vineyard near Mt. Lebanon. He let out the vineyard to keepers. Each keeper was to pay a rental of a thousand pieces of silver. She also has a vineyard, her beauty and her virtue, which is in her own keeping; yet Solomon shall have the thousand fold reward, because she is all together his and lives only for and in him. But also those that keep the fruits thereof, her mother and her brothers, who had taken such a thoughtful interest in her welfare in youth are also to share in the reward. They are to

have two hundred pieces, a double tithe, as a twofold reward for their solicitous interest in her proper bringing up. Thus the poem closes with the thought dwelling upon the deepest interests of domestic life. The solid ideals of true character are held up for our admiration and appeal is made to our respect and reverence for the integrity of the home.

The last two verses form an epilogue to the play. They are the language of the bride addressed to the king. She refers to him in the joyous role of dwelling in the garden, the beautiful grounds of the royal palace, with a happy company of friends about him eager to hear his voice. She is likewise anxious for his comforting words. "Make haste," therefore, she urges him, to come forth from the court circle and, like a young roe or a young hart sporting upon the hills, let him spend his time henceforth in the "mountains of spices," the free open region of love and beauty, typical of their holy and sacred devotion to each other.